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Alexander Pope

The Bookman Illustrated History of English Literature

BY
THOMAS SECCOMBE
AND
W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME II.—POPE TO SWINBURNE

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CHAPTER VI

DEFOE

“Les livres de De Foe ne sont que le développement des deux supplications de l'humanité: ‘Mon Dieu, donnez-nous notre pain quotidien;—mon Dieu, préservez-nous de la tentation!’ Ce furent les paroles qui bantèrent sa vie et son imagination.”—M. SCHWOB, *Préface à “Moll Flanders.”*

Early education—*The True-born Englishman*—Political pamphlets—*Robinson Crusoe*—A great mystifier—Minor novels—Defoe's realism.

DANIEL DEFOE was born in St. Giles's, Cripplegate, in the year of Charles II.'s joyful Restoration. Whether he was born shortly after or shortly before the exact date of that auspicious event is still uncertain, but the latest authorities incline to the winter of 1659-60. Daniel's father, James Foe, a butcher of Fore Street, was a younger son of a substantial yeoman farmer of Northamptonshire. (Disliking a monosyllabic surname, the writer changed his name to Defoe about 1703.) As a boy, in the streets about Smithfield Daniel observed the secrets of basket and candle-making, which he turned to such good purpose in *Robinson Crusoe*. Already he evinced a desire to talk with seamen and soldiers about “the great sea-fights or battles on shore that any of them had been in.” He must have heard, too, many relations of the wars of Oliver's time, also of the Great Plague, and of the Great Fire, which occurred when he was five and six respectively. He may well have had pointed out to him the blind poet Milton, whose house in Bunhill Row was little more than a stone's-throw from Fore Street. The fact that he was intended for the Nonconformist ministry implied that he had a thoroughly good educational grounding (in the academy at Newington Green) by Charles Norton, “a rank Independent,” both in languages and logic. But Daniel drew back and went into business as a hose-factor (or dealer in and exporter of stockings) in the early 'eighties. On January 1st, 1684, being already in business, he married Mary Tuffley, aged twenty, of St. Botolph's, Aldgate. He was a thorough-going Nonconformist in politics,

a supporter of Oates and his Protestant perjurers in 1680, while it is stated, somewhat improbably, that he was “out” with Monmouth in 1685 and had to leave England. It is certain that in 1688 he joined William's army in its advance on London.

Shortly after this Defoe's business went smash, and for a time he disappeared from London, though he managed by extraordinary diligence to make a composition with his creditors and eventually to pay many of them in full. Even at this time his pen was far from idle, and it was now that he wrote his remarkable *Essay upon Projects* (1688), containing suggestions for a national bank, for a system of assurance, for friendly societies, for pension offices or savings banks, for idiot asylums, for a reform of the bankruptcy laws, and for various academies. Many of these suggestions were already, it is true, in the air; most of them anticipate later ameliorations in our social system. In 1695 he obtained a small government appointment, and soon after he became a profitable shareholder in some brick and pantile works at Chadwell, near Tilbury. He removed thither from Hackney, set up a coach, and began rapidly paying off his debts. He was apparently established at Tilbury by 1696 or 1697, and in that year he commenced political pamphleteer with a trenchant pamphlet in support of William's design of maintaining a standing army. In 1700 appeared his wonderful metrical satire, *The True-born Englishman*. John Tutchin had accused William of being an alien Dutchman in a doggerel poem called *The Foreigners*. Defoe was “filled with a kind of rage,” and

retorted in *The True-born Englishman*, a satire, dated January, 1701, and opening with the famous lines :

Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
The devil always builds a chapel there.

In a preface, which is a model of clear and forcible writing, Defoe disclaims metrical correctness and explains his object, which is to convince his countrymen of the expediency of living up to their reputation of being good-natured, and to point out the absurdity of the English, who were a nation of mongrels compounded of the off-scourings of Europe in all ages, posing as a pure and ancient race and despising foreigners as such. "What they are to-day, we were yesterday, and to-morrow they will be like us." Defoe made a thousand pounds by this artful lampoon on his fellow-countrymen, and was astonished by its success, which had had no parallel since the appearance of *Hudibras*.

The satire naturally brought Defoe high into favour with William, and William's death in March, 1702, was a serious blow to Defoe. The friends of Queen Anne were among the Tories and high-fliers, and she herself was a strong Churchwoman. A favourite measure of the High Church party at this time was a bill to suppress the practice by which dissenters conformed and took the Anglican communion just for the purpose of qualifying for a place or an appointment, and then relapsed promptly into dissent. Defoe himself disapproved of this practice as savouring of equivocation, though it was connived at by the dissenting ministers. He hated much more, however, the spirit of intolerance by which the High Church policy was animated, and in December, 1702, he published his pamphlet called *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, which, as a piece of naked irony, approaches almost to the level of Swift. Writing ironically in the guise of an extreme Churchman, he shows with indignation how the Church has been steadily humiliated for fourteen years. Fines were useless; the proper remedy was a law that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished or sent to the galleys and the preacher promptly hanged. The stupidity of faction is such that both the parties entirely misinterpreted Defoe's intention. Both sides were furious when they discovered that they had been fooled by a satirist and a trimmer. A reward was offered

for the apprehension of Defoe, who finally surrendered, was fined, sentenced to imprisonment during the Queen's pleasure, and ordered to stand three times in the pillory. His standing in the pillory proved a triumph, for the people formed a guard, covered the pillory with flowers, and drank his health. But he had to go back to Newgate, and his business was ruined.

As he had talked with soldiers and seamen in his boyhood, so now in prison he talked with murderers, thieves, and harlots, and gathered the material for his criminal romances. While still in Newgate, on February 19th, 1704, he began the famous periodical known as *The Review*, a paper which lasted till 1713, and was the immediate forerunner of the *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and other periodical issues. Apart from the dynasty which he thus founded, *The Review* is a marvel of single-handed journalism. In strength, agility, and fertility as a journalist, Defoe has probably had few rivals. Leigh Hunt might perhaps be named as one. A little later in this same year (1704) Harley, having scented out Defoe as a pamphleteer whom a party might well be proud of, released him from his bondage, sent a large supply of money for the relief of his wife and children, and bade him prepare for secret service. One of his chief employments during the years that followed was a mission to the north with the object of removing national prejudices against the Union of England and Scotland.

Defoe's political preoccupations were already on the wane by 1719, in which year he discovered a new and untried source of income. He was already an adept in what we might call the *faits divers* department of journalism, and with amazing fertility and seriousness he wrote, as it were upon oath, on every topic likely to attract public curiosity. His power had already been shown in comparative trifles such as *The History of the Great Storm*, *Mrs. Veal's Ghost*, and a queer imaginary history of an earthquake in St. Vincent. In April, 1719, he published *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner*, founded upon the actual experience of one Alexander Selkirk, a Scots sailorman who had lived alone on the island of Juan Fernandez from 1704 to 1709, when he was released by Captain Woodes Rogers. Selkirk's history was related by Rogers in his *Cruising Voyage Round the World*, 1712, by Edward Cooke in

his *Voyage to the South Sea Trade*, and more briefly and popularly from Selkirk's own lips by Steele in *The Englishman* for December, 1713. Defoe must have been familiar with this last account (which he supplemented from some well-fingered books in his library—the voyages of Hakluyt, Purchas, Knox, Vilault, Le Duc, Pitman) when he sat down quietly at Stoke Newington to write his “strange surprising” masterpiece, a world's favourite from that day to this, and in its own class, that of prose fiction, second in point of time to *Don Quixote*. The name of Crusoe he took from an old schoolmate—the name is still familiar at Lynn. Its success was instantaneous. It was provided with a sequel, pirated at Dublin, abridged, put in a serial, imitated, moralised and translated into French and other tongues (there are more than forty imitations in Germany, where the original is still very popular)—all by 1720.

The writing of *Crusoe* had involved Defoe in no unusual effort; he was not the man to be caught in anything, not even in the web of his own imagination. It was as much a matter of routine to him to turn out his 2,000 words *per diem* of good, reliable, workmanlike prose as it is for a leading journalist at present to produce four leaders and as many reviews per week, in addition to a “weighty” magazine article every other month. Crusoe's island had the same stimulating effect upon Defoe and his imagination as the Château d'If had had upon Dumas. It was highly unlikely that he should ever find again a theme which should arouse so many of the boyish lusts that lurk in every boy-grown man: the lust for wrecks and rafts and ambushes, and firearms remorselessly used against hordes of savages, or, delicious thought! cannibals—the more mature lust for property and the spectacle of its turning sand into gold. But if Defoe did not fully succeed again (in doing what was in point

of fact impossible) it was not for lack of trying; nor was it due to his letting the grass grow under his feet. Henceforth he poured forth novels and narratives at an unprecedented pace down to 1725. He was then sixty-five years old and might be expected to require a little rest. Moreover, the market was for the time exhausted.

In spite of all his marvellous industry, Defoe seems to have had losses towards the end of his life, and he appears to have been in a far from prosperous state when he died in Ropemaker's Alley, Moorfields, on April 26th, 1731. He was buried in the Nonconformist *campo santo* of Bunhill Fields, where a column was erected to his memory in 1870.¹

Defoe's tales seem clearly upon the surface to be lineal descendants of the Spanish *novela picaresca*; but it is not likely that Defoe directly owed very much either to Mendoza or to his English imitators. These fictitious narratives are mainly concerned either with travel or with crime, and for models he had travel-diaries, criminal confessions, and autobiographical memoirs. The most distinctly picaresque of his novels are *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jacque*.

As a writer, Defoe was essentially a true-born Englishman, thoroughly homely and racy of the soil. His congeners are Latimer, Foxe, Bunyan, Swift, Franklin, Tom Paine, Cobbett, Dana, Runciman. If we have a national novel, it is *Robinson Crusoe*. It is to Defoe what *Don Quixote* was to Cervantes. Defoe resembles Smollett in the skilful use that he makes of figures, statistics, and general information of the most varied character. The tone of much of his writing and that of Smollett's travels is curiously identical. Defoe's style is a perfect mirror of the most positive-minded of our writers. He writes for the pioneers, workers, the mariners, the Caleb Garths of the English nation, and for primitive man the world over;

¹ “A great mystifier, mole-like, working fiercely underground, and enjoying the concealment of his proceedings”—we know his outward form best from the proclamation offering reward for his arrest. It describes him as of middle size and spare build, with dark complexion and hair beneath the wig, grey eyes, hook nose, sharp chin with a large wen near the mouth. Of his tastes and habits his works reveal much; we know he was “a great reader and had a fine library of his own; not a great talker, save probably on occasion, when his love of quotation and his great range of book-learning was marked. Of a healthy palate, no smoker, a lover of fine dress, exceeding neat and clean, a good waterman (he kept his own pleasure boat), an excellent gardener, chosen to help Queen Mary to lay out her gardens at Kensington. He liked a good house and everything roomy, plain, and comfortable about him. His writing is remarkably neat, clear, upright and round with a certain elegance that bespeaks his complete mastery of his fingers. He uses shorthand and many contractions, for he was a man that had large masses of copy to turn out, and could depend, for the most part, on no one but himself” (from York Powell's privately printed *Appreciation*, 1897).

his style might perhaps be described in a word as colonial, the negation of culture or affectation, the essence of economy, utility, plainness, and practicality. He lacks form almost entirely; he is as amorphous as life itself. And he aims not at any technical perfection, but at the objective of every feuilletonist—the market; for value received he is at pains to ascertain what the public want and to let them have it.

It seems at first sight extraordinary that Defoe should have written, or at least published, his first and best fiction at the mature age of sixty. But Defoe was a born writer, and an absolutely equable one. We know nothing from his pen that bears the marks of immaturity. We know nothing that shows the signs of age or waning power. His work seems uninfluenced alike by enforced rapidity or by the pressure of untoward circumstances. Nothing seemed able to reduce his energy or volume until it was finally stopped for ever by the numbing approach of death. He could write anything at any time, and make the best of anything in which neither a lively imagination, a delicate sensibility, a keen humour, a playful irony, a tender passion, nor a profound pathos was indispensable. Of some of these faculties he was by no means wholly devoid, but what he possessed of them as a whole was not much more than a glimmering. Where he excelled was in plain, straightforward story-telling,

in understanding and appraising the curiosity of the man in the street, and in possessing just the knowledge, and just the patience, and just the knack which would enable him most effectually to satisfy it. He was the first and cleverest of all descriptive reporters, for he knew better than any of his successors how and where to throw in those irrelevant details, tricks of speech and circumlocutions, which tend to give an air of verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative—the funny little splutterings and *naïvetés* as of a plain man who is not telling a tale for effect, but striving, after his own manner, to give you the plain, unvarnished truth. The vast and real superiority of *Robinson Crusoe* is due, we believe, exclusively to the Selkirk story which Defoe had the luck to encounter, the sense to appreciate, and the alertness to annex—a plot or fable so intrinsically interesting to every human being that it would raise by from twenty to thirty per cent. the power of any writer who was worth his salt.¹ That of Defoe in particular it raised much more, for it exactly suited his peculiar idiosyncrasies, it stimulated his rudimentary imagination and the better qualities of his latent (as opposed to his powerful, but somewhat obvious) humour; it showed to the best advantage his marvellous power as a realist, his extraordinary sense of circumstantiality, his occasional gift of introspection, his amazing actuality.

Duncan Campbell (1720), the story of a deaf and dumb soothsayer and quasi-impostor, is told with all the "log-book" minuteness characteristic of Defoe; the story is interrupted, however, by disquisitions on the deaf and dumb problem, on necromancy, apparitions, and the like.

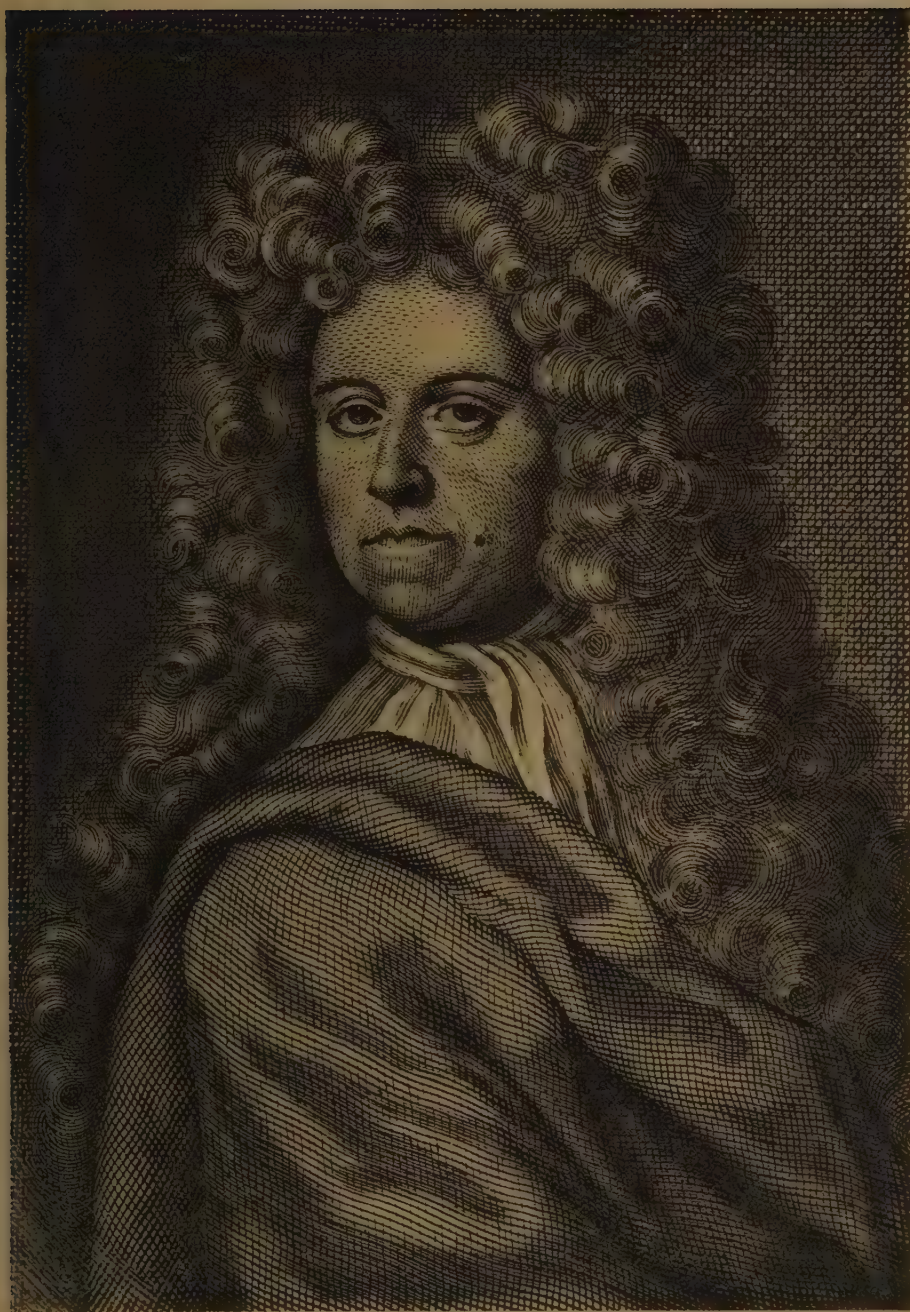
The Memoirs of a Cavalier (1720) is an autobiographical narrative of wars from 1632 to 1648 told by an ancestor of Dugald Dalgetty, a supposed Shropshire gentleman who shared in the rout at Marston Moor and gives what appears to be a very vivid account of it all in the words of an eyewitness. Chatham believed this to be a genuine historical narrative and by far the most interesting on its subject. After *Crusoe* and *Moll* it is the most interesting of his novels. It was (many believe) wholly the invention of Defoe.

The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton (1720) is a clever and carefully compiled tale of adventure in the galleys, at Goa, in Madagascar, and so across the Dark Continent to the Gold Coast. The hero runs everything, including piracy on the high seas, upon a working and commercial bases, and emerges at the end with a handsome competency.

In *Moll Flanders* (January, 1722) Defoe attains a higher level in the delineation of the very methodical swindler and thief, five times a wife, who relates her past life from the vantage-ground of a hollow reformation, unaccompanied by any restitution of dishonest gains. Defoe seems thoroughly at home in Petticoat Lane, and he is always better when he is dealing with externals and mercenary motives rather than with psychological analysis.

The unsurpassed realism of his *Journal of the Plague Year* (March, 1722) makes this in some respects his masterpiece. He places the narrative in the mouth of a sober citizen and saddler of London. He intensifies both the climax of horror and the suddenness of relief, but he is in a general way extraordinarily accurate, and Dr. Mead was in the habit of referring to the book as the recognised authority by a contemporary. Repetitions, contradictions, shrugs and hints and notes of interrogation are introduced with signal art to give an air of

¹ The magic of "The Wreck" is surely unapproached in the whole of prose fiction. By the side of it what narrative does not appear artificial?



Daniel Defoe

verisimilitude. In elaborating his circumstantial detail Defoe chooses the simplest, plainest language at his command, and seldom fails to attain the documentary dullness of unsophisticated truth.

Colonel Jacque (December, 1722) is a male counterpart to *Moll Flanders*. The early pickpocket days of the hero are the best part, and form, says Lamb, one of the most affecting natural pictures of a young thief ever drawn. The portions describing his work as a white slave and then as an overseer on a Virginian plantation, though interesting and enlightened in view, are not nearly so lifelike.

The Fortunate Mistress known by the name of Roxana in the Time of Charles II. (March, 1724) is a very characteristic work. It describes the adventures of a very luxurious courtesan, but there is not a syllable of voluptuousness in it. As a revelation of Defoe *intime* the book is almost without a rival, and after *Moll Flanders* and the *Cavalier* it is perhaps the most entertaining of his minor novels.¹ This vein having been exhausted, Defoe returned between 1724 and 1727 to the topics of his earlier days—"projects" of social and economic reform. Among these may be noted his amusing *Everybody's Business is Nobody's Business*, a diatribe against the insolence of servants, and his tradesmanlike *Use and Abuse of the Marriage Bed*. About the same time he wrote his excellent *Tour through Great Britain* (3 vols., 1724-6), which gives us an unrivalled indication of the state of the country, its industries and middle class during the early Brunswick period, his *Plan of English Commerce* and his *Complete English Tradesman*.²

¹ His shorter stories or tales include *Captain Avery* (December, 1719), *Life of Cartouche* (1722), *Narrative of J. Sheppard* (November, 1724), *Jonathan Wild* (June, 1725), *Captain John Gow* (June, 1725—the original of Scott's *Pirate*). In July, 1704, he published a characteristic, very solemn account of the *Great Storm* of the previous November.

² There are lives of Defoe by G. Chalmers, W. Wilson, W. Chadwick, William Lee (1869),* W. Minto, H. Morley, Thos. Wright, W. Whitten, and Albinia Wherry. There are excellent editions of the works, ed. Hazlitt, in Bohn's Library, and ed. G. A. Aitken (*Romances and Narratives*, 16 vols., 1895). See also the studies or sketches by Lamb, Hazlitt, Roscoe, John Forster, William Minto, Leslie Stephen, and the late Prof. York Powell, to whom the writer is indebted for several suggestions in this chapter. Of the *Journal of the Plague Year, being Observations or Memorials of the most remarkable Occurrences, as well public as private, which happened in London during the last great visitation in 1665. Written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London*, a charming edition was brought out by the London antiquary, E. W. Brayley, in 1839. After *Robinson Crusoe* no work represents the grave morality of Defoe or his air of irrefragable authenticity better than this. What confers such a peculiar lustre upon *Robinson Crusoe* is its European fame and influence. It is the pioneer of the exotic school in fiction. It is a new *Odyssey*. Rousseau praises it as an ideal treatise of natural education. The continent regards Robinson as typifying the best qualities of the English race. It does more than this, it typifies all the best prime qualities of the white man.

There are two curious anticipations in rough outline of the central motive of *Robinson Crusoe*; one is the *Effets surprenants de la Sympathie* of Marivaux, written in 1713, in which the life of a solitary upon an island is fantastically described; the other is *Voyages et Aventures de Jacques Massé*, published in 1710. In this strange and little-known book a boat's crew escape from a wreck near St. Helena. The narrator and one companion make for the interior, they get lost, and subsist for a long time on the shore in a very Crusoe-like manner. Eventually they rejoin their companions and have some fierce battles with the natives. Massé is a casuist rather of the Robinsonian pattern. After many adventures as a slave at Algiers and so forth, he reached London in 1694, and it was there that he wrote his travels. For some interesting remarks upon the cosmopolitan influence of the author of *Robinson Crusoe* the reader is referred to Texte's *Cosmopolitisme Littéraire*, 1895, and to André Le Breton's *Le Roman au dix-huitième Siècle*, 1898.

CHAPTER VII

ALEXANDER POPE

"If to have added more phrases to our language than any other but Shakespeare, if to have charmed four generations make a man a great poet, then Pope is one. . . . In the *Essay on Criticism* the wit and poet become apparent. It is full of clear thoughts, compactly expressed. In this poem, written when Pope was only twenty-one, occur some of those lines which have become proverbial, such as: 'A little learning is a dangerous thing!' 'For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.' In these we notice that terseness in which (regard being had to his especial range of thought) Pope has never been equalled."—LOWELL, *My Study Windows*.

"Whatever else the poets of Pope's time could do, they could not sing. They are the despair of the anthologists. Here and there among the brilliant reasoners, *raconteurs*, and satirists in verse, occurs a clever epigrammatist like Prior, or a ballad writer like Henry Carey, whose 'Sally in our Alley' shows the singing, and not talking voice, but hardly the lyric cry. . . . As the master had made it an axiom to avoid what was mean or low, so the disciples endeavoured to escape from what was common. This they contrived by the ready expedient of the periphrasis. They called everything something else."—HENRY A. BEERS, *English Romanticism*.

Lisping in numbers—*Pastorals*—Translation of Homer—*The Rape of the Lock*—*The Dunciad*—Essays and Satires—Pope's contemporary fame and posthumous influence.

ALEXANDER POPE, the son of a Lombard Street linen-draper of the same name, was born in London on May 21st, 1688. He was a cripple from birth, and further difficulties were thrown in the way of his career by the fact of his being a papist, which precluded his entering the universities or taking advantage of any of the high roads to eminence. The boy, however, early showed a marked predilection for poetry. He says of himself with regard to his early attempts at versification that he "lisped in numbers," and that he could not remember the time when he began to make verses. Dryden's poetry seems to have specially appealed to him, and, when only twelve years old, he asked to be taken to Will's Coffee-house to catch a glimpse of the great man who was there enthroned. Pope received his first instruction in the classics from Taverner, a Romish priest, who taught him the rudiments of Greek and Latin together. From the care of Taverner, he was removed to a school at Twyford, near Winchester, and again to another school near Hyde Park Corner, from neither of which he seems to have derived much good. Finally, at the age of twelve, Pope took his education into his own hands and set about completing

a plan of study which he had devised for himself. His father had retired from a very successful business about 1700 and had gone to live at Binfield, a pleasant country retreat in Windsor Forest. It was here that Pope studied to become a poet. He read and wrote with equal assiduity and made translations of many of the classics, one of which, his translation of the first book of Statius's *Thebais*, written at the age of fifteen, he afterwards revised and printed (1712). About the same time he composed his collection of *Pastorals*, literary exercises in a smoother and more regular type of verse, which were published in Tonson's *Miscellany* of 1709, and won from the public much applause. His adaptations of Chaucer's *Prologue to the Wife of Bath* and *January and May*, and his translation of Ovid's epistle of *Sappho to Phaon* were also written (the little poet affirmed) before he was sixteen. "From the age of sixteen," says Johnson, "the life of Pope as an author may be properly computed." His *Pastorals* were handed about in manuscript among the critics and poets of the time, and Pope became acquainted with some notable men, whose advice had some influence on the formation of his style. These were William Walsh, whom Dryden

designates "the best critic in the nation"; Sir William Trumbull, formerly Secretary of State, a man well on in years, who seems to have recognised Pope's genius and given him warm encouragement and friendly counsel; and, lastly, that dissolute old rake Wycherley, who could well have introduced him to the worst side of town-life had Pope's disposition and health permitted it. The feebleness of Pope's body, however, debarred him from almost all the favourite pursuits of youth. His life has been described as "one long disease." His body had to be stiffened with a corset. He was dressed and undressed by an attendant, and his sickness taught him "all the unpleasant and unsocial qualities of a valetudinary man." The one pursuit that was open to him, that of study, he eagerly followed. He says of himself that from fourteen to twenty he read only for amusement, from twenty to twenty-seven for improvement and instruction; that in the first part of his time he desired only to know, and in the second he endeavoured to judge. What is certain is that he read less for ideas than to find ready-made images and to feel for the best collocations of words.

Pope had now acquired all the manners of the author. At seventeen he began to frequent Will's Coffee-house and to speak disparagingly of critics. After the appearance of his *Pastorals* in 1709 side by side with the *Pastorals* of Ambrose Philips, his future enemy, Pope wrote his *Essay on Criticism*, a compendium of Horace and Locke, and a codification of the latest French rules, which was published anonymously in May, 1711. This attracted the notice of Addison, who praised it in *The Spectator*, and gained for Pope an introduction to Addison's literary circle. In 1712 Pope's *Rape of the Lock*¹ appeared in *Lintot's Miscellany*, and in the same year he wrote *The Messiah*, a pastoral modelled on Virgil's fifth eclogue, for *The Spectator*. His *Windsor Forest* (1713) won

him the friendship of Swift, and Pope was beguiled into leaving Addison's "little senate" and joining Swift's "Scriblerus Club," which included Gay, Arbuthnot, Atterbury, Oxford, and others. *The Temple of Fame*, a liberal paraphrase of Chaucer's *House of Fame*, followed in 1715. Pope now undertook the stupendous task of translating Homer. The work was begun at the instigation of Sir William Trumbull. Pope invited subscriptions for it and was warmly encouraged by Swift, perhaps the most faithful of his friends. *The Iliad* appeared at length in six volumes (1715-20). He afterwards supplemented this by a translation, with the aid of Broome and Fenton, of *The Odyssey* (1725-6). Both ventures were in every way successful. Pope made about £9,000 by them and laid the foundations of that competence which he enjoyed with sense and moderation. The work also excited great admiration. It was, however, the cause of a breach between Pope and Addison.²

The first volume of Pope's *Homer* appeared in 1715, and in the same year Addison's friend Tickell published his version of the first book of *The Iliad*. Pope affected to believe that this was done at Addison's instigation, and years afterward vented his spleen in a clever satire (published in 1735), *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, in which Addison appears under the character of Atticus. The quarrel was rather a one-sided affair: Addison did not allow himself to be disturbed by these attacks, and was never actively hostile to Pope. Pope's irritable temperament had made for him other enemies, real or fancied, and it was with the idea of wiping off old scores with these that the *Dunciad* was written. The first three books appeared anonymously in May, 1728, and created a mighty stir among the authors of the period. An enlarged edition was issued in 1729, but the work was not acknowledged until 1735.

Pope was now living at Twickenham. In

¹ If Pope is profoundest in his *Satires* and most happily sententious in his *Essay on Man*, he is more purely a poet in *The Rape of the Lock* than in any other of his productions. Elsewhere he has shown more force, more wit, more reach of thought, but nowhere such a truly artistic combination of elegance and fancy. It ranks by itself, indeed, as one of the purest works of human fancy and one of the most harmonious. The fancy, it is true, is that of the wit rather than that of the poet, and Pope's fancy was so exceedingly circumscribed that it seldom extends beyond the epigram or the couplet upon which he is immediately at work.

² It also led to Pope's animosity against Bentley, who had remarked in the presence of Mead and Atterbury, "A pretty poem, Mr. Pope; but you must not call it Homer." "I talked against his Homer," said Bentley, "and the portentous cub never forgives." His failure as Shakespeare-editor exacerbated him against all verbal critics. Of Patrick, the dictionary-maker, he said he could allow him to know the meaning of a single word, but not of two words put together.

1716 his family had removed from Binfield to Chiswick, and on the death of his father, in the next year, Pope purchased a small leasehold estate of five acres at Twickenham. Here he lived in easy circumstances, with numerous friends, a mother to whom he was tenderly attached, and a garden to occupy his leisure. The social circle was a large one. Bolingbroke, who had come to live at Dawley, was a close neighbour of Pope's, and Pope frequently drove over to visit him. He also kept up his correspondence with Swift, and made arrangements for the publication of *Gulliver's Travels*. With Atterbury and Congreve he was on familiar terms. He stayed at the country houses of Lord Harcourt, Lord Bathurst, and Lord Digby, and turned most of those establishments upside down by the taxes he laid upon the endurance of the servants. He demanded coffee at all hours of the night, and in spite of the liberal vails he gave, Harley's servants were in open revolt against the "little nightingale."

Both as regards social position and pecuniary profit Pope had now achieved a unique position in English literature. Those men of letters who had failed to secure equal favours from the public were naturally disinclined to ascribe his success entirely to his own superior merit. Pope's own self-love and ambition, on the other hand, had been enormously increased by success, and his temper, always impatient of opposition, had become irritably sensitive to all criticism which was calculated to make his countrymen's judgment of his merits less favourable than his own. As Pope had capped Dryden's translation of Virgil by his translation of Homer, so now he conceived the idea of immortalising the folly of his critics by laureating them as dunces in the same way in which Dryden had distinguished Settle and Shadwell. In his translations Pope had laboured confessedly for a big pecuniary reward; there can be little doubt that he put the whole of his little soul into the elaborate lampoon which he called the *Dunciad*. There is a great waste of strength in this sublimated squib, and most of the petty writers whose names it enshrines like flies in amber are now wholly unknown.

Pretty! in amber to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms!
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there.

But although in order to appreciate its allusions we have to read the *Dunciad* with notes, it is easy to see what execution it must have done at the time, and it is impossible to withhold one's admiration from the wit, the wickedness, the triumphant mischief of the thing. All the time he was carrying on this unholy warfare Pope was carefully preparing a supreme demonstration of moral as opposed to mere literary pre-eminence. Pope's *Essay on Man* was first planned in 1725. The moral epistles to Burlington and Bathurst, on false taste and on riches respectively, were based upon principles similar to those which he was preparing to systematise in his larger essay upon the moral government of the world. The *Essay on Man* was finally published after the usual concealed precautions and manœuvres in 1733-4; the first epistle appearing in February, 1733, the fourth and last in January, 1734. The *Essay on Man* occupies a position among Pope's works analogous to that of the *Essay on Criticism*. As the latter was the product of general forces operating throughout Europe in the general sphere of taste and imagination, so the *Essay on Man* reflects the influences which since the Reformation had determined in England the direction of religious thought. The most advanced school of theory at the time was the deistical, and the ideas of this school were filtered down for Pope, himself no thinker, through the medium of Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke himself was in all but name an optimist. He rejected revelation, ridiculed the Old Testament, and refused to believe in a future state, but he was convinced, "in opposition to atheists and divines," that the general state of mankind under the present scheme of providence was a state not only tolerable but happy.

Yet the theory that Pope merely versified what Bolingbroke set down in prose can, as Dr. Johnson says, hardly be true. The *Essay* plainly appears the fabric of a poet: what Bolingbroke supplied could be only the first principles; the order, illustrations, and embellishments must all be Pope's, and these, it must be added, are just the things which constitute the merit of the poem. The philosophy of the poem is poor and incongruous. It is the harmony of the rhetoric, the terseness of the expression, and the brilliance of the epigrams that make the poem one of the most fondly cherished and

the most frequently cited in the English language.¹

It was Pope's design, he tells us, to

Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
And catch the Manners living as they rise;
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man.

The general drift of our philosophaster is clearly conveyed at the close of the first epistle:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth as in th' ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees.

From Nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Teenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;
All Discord, Harmony not understood;
All partial Evil, universal Good:
And spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, *WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT.*"

It is true that the reader may not derive either much pleasure or much comfort from these unmitigated platitudes. But it is far otherwise as regards the exquisite beauty and refinement of Pope's poetical ornaments and figures. Who, for instance, is not charmed with such illustrations as that of the poor Indian

Who thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company;

or again with the lines—

Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale;
and—

The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line?

Who again has not been delighted with the phrasing in

Die of a rose in aromatic pain;

or again—

From grave to gay, from lively to severe?

The most original, and in many ways perhaps the ripest, of all Pope's maturer writings was the series of satires entitled *Imitations from Horace*, the origin of which is

ascribed to a suggestion made in the winter of 1732, during the progress of the famous *Essay on Man*.

"When I had a fever one winter in town," Pope said to his friend Spence, "that confined me to my room for some days, Lord Bolingbroke came to see me, happened to take up a Horace that lay on the table, and in turning it over dipt on the first satire of the second book. He observed how well that would hit my case if I were to imitate it in English. After he was gone I read it over, translated it in a morning or two, and sent it to press in a week or fortnight after. And this was the occasion of my imitating some other satires and epistles afterwards."

There are six of these wonderful satires, with an epilogue and a prologue, ranging in date from 1733 to 1738. The prologue, in the form of an *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, was written in 1734-5, and is perhaps Pope's masterpiece, for it shows his command of language and metre at their very highest development, and it contains the subtlest of all his depreciations, that of his old friend Addison, stippled in from the depths of his unforgiving nature with an infinitude of artful, laborious, yet most venomous scratches.

Pope's moral nature had been warped by success and flattery. Yet his thoughts were henceforth directed to one constant object, that of exhibiting a fine and generous moral character. He proposed to achieve this in perpetuity by securing the publication of his select correspondence, while at the same time he made it appear that his letters were published against his wish and in spite of his opposition. He arranged accordingly for a sham surreptitious edition of a portion of his correspondence, upon the appearance of which he took advantage publicly to advertise that he was now under the painful necessity of printing a genuine edition. He carefully pointed out in the preface how he had unconsciously drawn his own portrait in letters written without the least thought that the world would ever be a witness to them; while, as a matter of fact, he not only studiously revised the letters, but materially altered them with a view of setting

¹ A Swiss professor, named Jean Pierre de Crousaz (1653—1750), a Christian apologist of some ability, attacked the fatalism and exposed some of the sophistries of Pope's system in his *Examen de l'Essai de M. Pope* (Lausanne, 1737). Pope was seriously alarmed by the attack, but was fortunate in obtaining the services of a redoubtable bravo of controversy in the person of William Warburton. Pope was most effusive in his thanks for this support, and assured his champion that he understood the Popean philosophy better than Pope himself.

forth his own virtues to greater advantage. By an even more discreditable manoeuvre he tried to cajole Swift into taking upon himself the onus of publishing their mutual correspondence, though he had eventually to arrange for the publication of the letters in London in 1741 under cover of a lying statement to the effect that they were merely a reprint of an unauthorised Dublin edition.

In 1742 he published the fourth, and in many respects the most finished, book of his *Dunciad*, taking advantage of a recent quarrel to enshrine Colley Cibber as hero in place of Theobald. There were no signs as yet of waning power, but Pope in reality was ageing rapidly. During the next two years he was constantly occupied in the final revision of his works. Bolingbroke saw him often after 1743, and Spence watched him as Xenophon watched Socrates. The illness which proxed fatal to the poet was asthmatical dropsy.¹ Physicians and quacks were alike summoned to his bedside, and some of the latter eagerly detected signs of improvement. "Here I am," said Pope, "dying from a hundred good symptoms." At the earnest request of Hooke, the historian, a fervent Catholic, on May 29th, 1744, he sent for a priest and received absolution. On the evening of the next day he died, and six days later was buried in Twickenham Church. When Pope died in 1744, he was at the height

of his renown, the acknowledged monarch of letters; as supreme as Voltaire was when the excitement of his triumphal return to Paris hastened his end a generation later. Voltaire himself, in 1726, had called Pope the best poet living, and by 1744 Pope's style was paramount throughout the cultivated world: it was the apotheosis of wit, point, lucidity, and technical skill. Pope was a small man in many ways. But he was, we must remember, a great sufferer. And, if the achievement be any index of the soul, he was far from little. He was, indeed, in a far truer sense than Donne, whose satires he imitated, the ruler "as he thought fit" of the "universal monarchy of wit." The prominence which he came to give to Ethics in his scheme of values is characteristic of our race. Few poets have left more permanent traces on the language. After Shakespeare and Milton he is commonly recognised as the third of our great poets. He succeeded in bringing poetry, to which we cannot rationally refuse the epithet great, nearer to the ordinary level of prose than any other English writer. In his own century he obtained a completer recognition than either Shakespeare or Milton had done. He was feared, perhaps, more than any man of his time, and was flattered by imitation to an extent which almost proved fatal to the whole school of poetry which he represents.

¹ Friends rather precipitately attributed his end to gluttony. He was frequently sick at meals. "The death of great men," says Johnson, "is not always proportioned to the lustre of their lives. Hannibal (says Juvenal) did not perish by a javelin or a sword; the slaughters of Cannæ were revenged by a ring. The death of Pope was imputed to a silver saucepan in which it was his delight to heat potted lampreys."

The first edition of Pope was that by Bishop Warburton, who was responsible among other things for the arrangement of the satires and the titles given to them. In the following year, 1752, came Joseph Warton's famous *Essay on Pope*, continued in 1782. Owen Ruffhead's *Life* appeared in 1769, Johnson's in 1781, and that by Robert Carruthers in 1857. All these are superseded by the *Life* by W. J. Courthope, 1889. This last is incorporated with the standard edition of the *Works* of Pope in 10 vols., 1871-1889, in which the labours of Croker, Dilke, Elwin, and Courthope are alike embodied. This is known as "Elwin and Courthope."* An excellent one-volume edition is the *Globe*, edited by Dr. A. W. Ward, originally in 1869. There is an interesting edition of the *Essay on Man* by Mark Pattison, 1870. The *Essays* by Lowell, Leslie Stephen, and Churton Collins on Pope are to be consulted. Lord Jeffreys' *Essay on Pope* is characteristic; Beljame has much on Pope's position as a man of letters and as a pioneer literary wage-earner. *The Rape of the Lock* has been well edited by Ryland and Eaton, and "embroidered" pictorially by Aubrey Beardsley.

"Pope himself had no lyric gift, but the complete disappearance during the first half of the eighteenth century of the poetical freedom and impulse which had inspired so much English verse up to the time of *Alexander's Feast* suggests that general causes were at work beyond the operation of individual genius. And the simplest explanation of the phenomenon seems to me to be that the circumstances which had brought about the revolution of 1688 had for the time being caused the temporary suppression of certain mediæval elements in the national life, which did not rise again into vigour till they found renewed poetical expression in the lyrics of Gray and Collins" (Courthope). It is noteworthy that Pope is praised by Johnson for not varying the couplet. Cowper, on the other hand, sees matter for blame in Pope's mechanic art and balanced line. It was natural enough that when the Queen Anne poetry took a serious turn, the generalising spirit of the age should conduct it preferentially into the paths of ethical and didactic verse.

CHAPTER VIII

SWIFT

"He describes his fictitious persons as if for the police."—EMERSON.

"The soul of Rabelais dwelling in a dry place."—COLERIDGE.

With Temple at Moor Park—*The Battle of the Books*—*A Tale of a Tub*—Stella and Vanessa—The Scriblerus Club—*Gulliver's Travels*—Literary characteristics—Arbuthnot.

JONATHAN SWIFT, born in Hoey's Court, Dublin, on November 30th, 1667 (a few months after the death of his father), was taken over to England as an infant and nursed at Whitehaven, whence he returned to Ireland in his fourth year. His grandfather, Thomas Swift, vicar of Goodrich, near Ross, appears to have been a doughty member of the Church militant, who lost his possessions by taking the losing side in the Civil War, and died in 1658, before the Restoration could bring him redress. He married Elizabeth, niece of Sir Erasmus Dryden, the poet's grandfather. Hence the familiarity of the poet's well-known "cooling-card" to the budding genius of his kinsman Jonathan: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." Swift was educated mainly at the charges of his uncle Godwin. At six he went to Kilkenny Grammar School, where Congreve was a schoolfellow; at fourteen he entered, as a pensioner, Trinity College, Dublin, where he seems to have neglected his opportunities.¹ The patronage of his uncle galled him; he was dull and unhappy. We can find in Swift no signs of precocious genius. In 1688 the rich uncle, whose supposed riches had dwindled so much that at his death he was almost insolvent, died, and Swift sought counsel of his mother at Leicester. As a direct result of this domestic conference, Swift, towards the close of 1689, entered upon an engagement as secretary to Sir William Temple, whose wife was related to Mrs. Swift. It was at Moor Park, near Farnham, the residence to which Sir William Temple had retired late in life, that Swift's acquaintance with Esther Johnson, the "Stella" of the *Journal to Stella*, began. Mrs. Johnson, Esther's

mother, the widow of a merchant of good family, was living at Moor Park as companion to Lady Giffard, Temple's sister. Swift was twenty-two and Esther eight years old at the time, and a curious friendship sprang up between them. He taught the little girl how to write, and gave her advice in her reading. On his arrival at Moor Park Swift was, in his own words, "a raw, inexperienced youth," and his duties were originally purely those of an amanuensis. His abilities finally won him the confidence of his employer, and he was entrusted with important missions. He was introduced to William III. while on a visit to Sir William Temple, and on one occasion accompanied the King in his walks round the grounds. In 1693 Temple sent him to William III. to convince that monarch of the necessity for triennial parliaments. The next year, however, the young man quitted Temple, who had, he considered, delayed 'too long in obtaining him preferment. He was ordained, and obtained the small prebend of Kilroot, near Belfast, where he carried on a flirtation with a Miss Waring, whom he called Varina. In May, 1696, he grew tired of Irish life, and was glad to accept Temple's proposals for his return to Moor Park, where he continued until Temple's death in 1699. He was employed in preparing Temple's memoirs and correspondence for publication, and in 1697 he wrote *The Battle of the Books*, supporting the side taken by his patron in the Letters of Phalaris controversy, in which his amazing gift of allegorical irony is first exhibited to the world. On Temple's death in January, 1699, he returned to Ireland with a

¹ See, however, *Notes and Queries*, 6th series, v. 383.

legacy of £100 and the task of publishing his former employer's posthumous works. He was offered and accepted the post of chaplain to Lord Berkeley, and early in 1700 he obtained the livings of Laracor, Agher, and Rathbeggan, with the prebend of Dunlavin in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Miss Waring seems to have thought that these preferments afforded an excellent opportunity for matrimony; but Swift was of a different opinion, and his connection with "Varina" was broken for ever. In 1701 he took his Doctor's degree at Dublin, and in the same year published anonymously a political pamphlet, *A Discourse on the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome*. This pamphlet is a characteristic reflection upon the bigotry and bloodthirstiness of the paltry factions of the time, and was sufficiently trenchant to be attributed to Somers, and again to Burnet. The Whig magnates began to regard Temple's late secretary as a desirable recruit for their publicity department. After five months in London Swift returned to Ireland in September, 1701, accompanied by Esther Johnson and her friend Mrs. Dingley. Swift had pointed out to them that they could live more cheaply in Ireland than elsewhere, and henceforth the two ladies lived in Swift's houses at Dublin and Laracor during his absence, and when he was in Ireland took lodgings in his neighbourhood.

There is reason to believe that Swift's first great satire, *A Tale of a Tub*, was drafted at Kilroot in 1695, and well-nigh completed at Moor Park about a year later. It was first published anonymously in May, 1704, but its real authorship was soon guessed at by the wits, amongst whom Swift's position was henceforth assured. In the tale, to the alarm of most of those of his contemporaries who could understand him, Swift discussed the growing pretensions of science, the impotence of human reason, the immeasurable follies of mankind with an almost apathetic disregard for the decencies or conventionalities of his age and country. Irreverent as it was, the satire was an unmistakable defence of the Church of England, against the opponents of which, whether Papists, Nonconformists, or Free-thinkers, the author poured forth an inextinguishable torrent of hatred and abuse. When the Whig party collapsed in 1710, Swift was amused, if not delighted, to witness the snub administered to the friends of dissent. All

that prevented him from throwing himself into the arms of the Tories was their alleged Jacobitism and supposed tolerance of Catholics. But his fears were soon allayed, and in the autumn of 1710, upon discovering that Harley was prepared to treat him as an intimate friend, Swift could not contain his jubilation; and from making ugly faces he soon got to throwing the stickiest mud he could find at "those ungrateful dogs," his late Whig friends. His more important contributions to the Tory propaganda of the period were his papers in *The Examiner*, written in the winter and spring of 1710-11, and his notable pamphlet upon *The Conduct of the Allies*. In the plainness and patent honesty of this appeal to common sense even Daniel Defoe was excelled. Issued on November 27th, 1711, *The Conduct of the Allies* was greedily bought, and more than anything else made the Peace of Utrecht acceptable to the nation. Swift lived modestly, during this period, in lodgings, first in Bury Street, St. James's, and afterwards at Chelsea; but his position in politics and social life between 1710 and 1714 was perhaps the most imposing ever maintained by an English man of letters. He was in the real or pretended confidence of all the leaders of the day—and was himself, indeed, one of the most influential, though when he turned the talk to preferment he found the *Tale of a Tub* a veritable millstone round his neck.

The proud resentment with which Swift repudiated a pecuniary *douceur* from the ministers, and the payment in submission to his whims and caprices which he exacted instead, was all his own. He despised the rewards of ministers utterly: he knew how they were obtained. The fierce ambition which made him so anxious to secure a bishopric or other suitable provision was due in large measure to his anxiety to provide in a handsome manner, matrimonial or otherwise, for the one woman whom he really loved, the absent Stella, to whom in a series of letters from September, 1710, to June, 1713 (the unique *Journal to Stella*), he communicated almost every fact and every feeling of this teeming and triumphant period in his chequered career. Apart from the abnormal disgust which the human animal seemed to excite in Swift, the consciousness of ill-health and the terror of poverty by which he was afflicted render it improbable that he ever contemplated



Jonathan Swift.

more than a nominal union with Stella. If the formal ceremony of marriage between them ever did take place (a very much disputed point) it was certainly not until Swift had attained his fiftieth year, and marked the close rather than the commencement of an epoch of mutual confidence and unclouded affection. If the marriage took place at all (which is unlikely), it can only be regarded as a concession to the jealousy which Stella had conceived of a rival in Swift's affections. On October 20th, 1710, Swift first mentions in his journal-letter to Stella the name of Mrs. Vanhomrigh as that of his hostess. Esther Vanhomrigh ("Vanessa"), the daughter, became Swift's devoted slave. Swift flattered this clever and impressionable girl by playing at being her tutor. She startled him after a time by confessing that love had taken the place of admiration in her heart. Swift tried to convince her of the impropriety of a romantic passion and to indicate a more rational kind of intimacy in his remarkable poem of *Cadenus and Vanessa*, begun in 1712 and finished in 1713. Poor Hussy's infatuation was not amenable to such treatment. She followed Swift to Ireland, and he was reduced to expedients for temporising with her and mollifying Stella. In 1723 Vanessa is said to have written to Stella or to Swift (there are discrepancies between the versions of Sheridan and Lord Orrery, neither of whom is distinguished by minute accuracy), asking whether the report that they were married was true. Swift rode down to Vanessa's retreat at Colebridge, threw down her letter in a great rage, and left without speaking a word. Vanessa died shortly afterwards, having revoked a will in Swift's favour. Swift hid himself for two months in the South of Ireland. Stella also was shocked, but when some one remarked that the deceased must have been a remarkable woman to inspire such a poem as *Cadenus and Vanessa*, observed that there was nothing surprising about it, for the Dean, as all the world knew, could write finely upon a broomstick.

Swift had played with and been injured by fire; he had impaired his recuperative force just at the period he was to be most in need of it. In June, 1713, after many disappointments, he obtained the deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin, and returned to Ireland. He was summoned back to England by his political

friends in September. The short exile, during which he had been horribly melancholy, was his Elba, and it was followed in August, 1714, after the Tory *débâcle*, by his St. Helena, or permanent exile at Dublin, where for thirty years he was dying daily of the inanition of inferior company. Like Napoleon, he sought relief in petty quarrels with the local authorities—in this case the Archbishop and the choir. It was practically his only amusement. The melancholy which now oppressed him was far more horrible than anything of the kind he had encountered before. The self-suppression of his early manhood, the hopeless confusion of his love affairs, the defective chemistry of his body, his recent experience as a place-broker of the very basest aspect of humanity, his political disappointment, and the shock of severance from friends who had been at the very helm of the world's affairs: these things combined to produce in Swift the settled gloom of a profound misanthropy. It was under these cruelly adverse circumstances that Swift's slowly maturing intellectual powers attained their zenith, about 1724, after ten years of exile, in the course of which he had entirely shed the Swift of 1714. In the course of this time a keen but not altogether unkindly contempt had developed into a positive loathing for all mankind. With friends and foes alike, henceforth, his insight into human weakness was absolutely terrible, and every seemingly playful scratch had a malignant poison in it.

During the last months of Queen Anne, Swift joined his London friends Arbuthnot, Pope, Parnell, Gay, and Harley (Lord Oxford) in establishing the Scriblerus Club, the members of which agreed to write in ridicule of sham learning and false taste. In 1714 the Club was broken up. Swift sought refuge in Ireland, Oxford was impeached, Bolingbroke fled to St. Germain. From the *Scriblerus Memoirs* then projected (though not published until 1741) Swift got the first hints for *Gulliver*, and Pope for his *Dunciad*. We first hear of *Gulliver's Travels* about Christmas, 1721, when Bolingbroke wrote to Swift, "I long to see your *Travels*." In 1724 Swift was preoccupied over his *Drapier's Letters*. In 1725 he was amending and transcribing the *Travels*. They were inspired, he wrote to Pope, by his hatred and detestation for that animal called man. Not the individual so much, but the whole species. "Oh, if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I

would burn my *Travels*!" In 1726 the old Club reassembled in London "like mariners after a storm." Swift began looking out for a printer who would risk his ears and print *Gulliver*, but the serious illness of Esther Johnson (Stella) necessitated his temporary return to Dublin, and it was not until the end of October, 1726, that *Travels into several remote Nations of the World. In 4 parts. By Lemuel Gulliver, first a Surgeon, and then a Captain of several Ships*, was published, anonymously, by the bookseller Benjamin Motte. Its success was rapid and complete. Arbuthnot wrote to the author that it would have as great a run as Bunyan. Swift's genius is certainly well represented by *Gulliver*; for although it illustrates no single one of his manifold talents in its most intense form, its merit is that more than any other single piece it unites all his excellences.

The book was pirated at Dublin in 1727, and translated into French in the July of the same year by the Abbé Desfontaines. It was read with the utmost avidity, though a bishop of his acquaintance told Swift that it was full of improbable lies, and that for his part he hardly believed a word of it. If Swift's end had really been to vex the world, rather than divert it, the book was a signal failure. He made either £200 or £300 out of it—the only money he ever earned by his writings.¹ After his success, Swift's sojourn in London during the season of 1727 must have been a fairly pleasant one. He returned to Dublin just in time to watch over the death-bed of Stella, who expired after a lingering illness in January, 1728. Swift was then in his sixty-second year. The story of the remaining seventeen years of his life he had already epitomised with a terrible and remorseless insight in the passages which he had devoted to the human animal in a state of senility. Of all such matters, round which mankind is so solicitous to wrap the rags of respectability, Swift loves to expose the dark secrets. He was made for a bustling, multiple life and an enormous expenditure of nervous energy. A

tranquil existence led in his case to the secretion and dangerous accumulation of a morbid and malignant irritability.

How his irritability and eccentricities and avarice grew upon him, so that his friends and servants had a hard task in humouring him, we learn from the traditions of others; how his memory began to fail, and other signs of breaking up began to appear, we learn from himself. The fire of his genius was not, however, yet burnt out. Between 1729 and 1736 he continued to throw out satires and lampoons in profusion, referring to the men and topics of the day, and particularly to the political affairs of Ireland; and it was during this time that his *Directions to Servants*, his *Polite Conversation*, and other well-known *facetiae* first saw the light. The mental decay which he had always feared ("I shall be like that tree," he once said: "I shall begin dying at the top") became marked in 1740. Paralysis was followed by aphasia. Legal guardians were appointed in August, 1742. Amidst the solitude and gloom of helpless isolation, a period of great physical agony was followed by an apparently complete apathy. After three years of living death he was finally released on October 19th, 1745, six weeks short of seventy-eight. Four days later he was buried at midnight by Stella's side in St. Patrick's Cathedral.

In the great structure of more or less refined conventionality which has been so assiduously built up in England from Addison's time, Swift has no part or lot. He would never abjure his right to call a spade a spade. No writer ever wrote whose meaning is more absolutely unmistakable; and this is the more remarkable inasmuch as Swift revelled in irony, banter, persiflage, personal satire, parody, and all the most ticklish forms of literary art. But he, first of all our writers, recognised lucid exposition as the sovereign quality of prose. He realised his meaning in the clearest and most positive manner, and then expressed it in the plainest and most direct. Force and clearness can no farther go than in Swift's prose from 1708 to 1728. Pat words or

¹ It was badly mangled in the press, he complained (especially Bk. II., chaps v. and vi.); like *Crusoe*, it was reprinted in a serial—*Parker's Penny Post*. The painful attempts that have been made to discover *Gulliver's* ancestry only serve to throw the author's originality into relief. Swift had naturally read Lucian, Rabelais, and possibly also *The Arabian Nights*. He had read as a young man the lunar adventures of Bishop Wilkins, Bishop Godwin, and Cyrano de Bergerac. He had read contemporary accounts of *Peter the Wild Boy*, the *History of Sevarambes*, by D'Alais (1677), and Foligny's *Journey of Jacques Sadeur to Australia* (1693). He may have read Joshua Barnes's description of a race of "Pygmies" in his *Gerania* of 1675.

phrases never diverted his thought. Words were the slaves who hastened to execute his slightest whim. There was nothing he thought that he could not express, and express in such a way that it would never have to be said again; for Swift habitually made his ideas as clear to the humblest capacity as they are capable of being made to any one. The words of the common man arrange themselves, as it were subconsciously, in the mind of this greatest of satirists and wits. Some of his profoundest effects of irony are obtained through verisimilitude. He represents the under or shady side of human activity with such minuteness as to make its infinite pettiness clear to the meanest observer. The things he hated most in literature were cant, false sentiment, smug decency and triteness, all of which he assailed in a series of the most ludicrous images and the most crushing burlesques. Swift employed these arts in a manner which is the exact reverse of that employed by the majority of practitioners. With him there is no fumbling, no mouthing, no smiling or twitching of the lips. He says everything with the gravity of a divine and the stolidity of a carter. Yet no other immortal has ever made his fellow-men so conscious of their mortality, their purposeless bustle, their puny rage, their colossal insignificance. No single writer—not even Voltaire—has ever proved himself so formidable as Swift, whether he was attacking an individual, a party, a powerful ministry, a great country, or the whole of mankind. His most comprehensive scorn, that for mankind, may be classified under three heads: the Olympian, the whimsical, and the brutal. And of the two former kinds we find examples everywhere in *Gulliver*, a book to which, as an example of purity and nervousity in English prose style, we can point to no equal.

Dryden had foretold his cousin Swift that he would never be a poet; but for those who believe in gradations of poetic power, the prediction is merely what the Houyhnhnms would call the thing that is not, for Swift wrote a quantity of verse of a high order. It was true that full-sail verse was beyond his skill, but the simple fore-and-aft rig of Butler's octosyllabics he could manage effectively

enough, as may be seen in his verses of 1731 on the death of Dr. Swift, the technique of which is hardly inferior to the wit and insight which render it one of the miracles of occasional verse. There is not only, as Hazlitt remarks, a dry humour, an exquisite tone of irony in these productions, but there is also a touching, unpretending pathos mixed up with the most whimsical and eccentric of his satirical strokes. In his verse, as in his prose, he studiously avoids ornament, metaphor, poetic diction, antithesis, erudition, and the Pindaric manner. Plain words in their proper order is his secret.¹

A great friend of Swift, Gay, and Pope, and with them the most prominent member of the Scriblerus Club, was Dr. John Arbuthnot (1667—1735), a keen Tory and son of an episcopal minister in Kincardineshire. Arbuthnot owes his fame rather, perhaps, to what he did not write, than to what he did. He was a man of great intellectual power, and great kindness of soul, who was incapable of being a serious rival to any of his contemporaries owing to his complete lack of literary ambition. Dr. Johnson recognised in him a kindred spirit, but with the sagacity of the Great Cham Swift combined the humour and fine literary instinct of Goldsmith. Chesterfield had a profound regard for him, and Swift once said that if there were more Arbuthnots about he would burn his *Travels*. His *Memoirs of the Life and Discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus*, published by Pope in 1741, form an extraordinary *olla podrida* of strange burlesque learning, from which Swift, Sterne, Scott, and others seem to have pulled a few plums. *The Art of Political Lying*, and his famous political satire, *The History of John Bull* (1712), must have been inspired directly by Swift. As an allegory of statecraft this remains without a rival, and may be termed the great-grandfather of the political satires and cartoons of fifty years later. It served as the most piquant sauce that could have been devised to go with Swift's standing dish of *The Conduct of the Allies* to turn the popular humour against the Whigs. Arbuthnot died after much suffering on February 27th, 1735. He was buried five days later in St. James's, Piccadilly.

¹ The great editions of Swift are those of Hawkesworth and Scott (1814 and 1824, 19 vols. with Life). But there is an admirable edition of the Prose Works recently added to Bohn's Standard Library. There are Lives by Deane Swift, Orrery, Delany, Sheridan, Johnson, Forster (unfinished), Leslie Stephen, Moriarty, Churton Collins, and Sir Henry Craik.*

CHAPTER IX

THE RISE OF THE ESSAY: ADDISON AND STEELE

"To estimate Addison at his real value we must regard him as the Chief Architect of Public Opinion in the eighteenth century."—W. J. COURTHOPE.

"Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."—DR. JOHNSON. — — —

Post-Restoration London—Addison—The Kit-cat Club—Steele's plays—*The Tatler*—*The Spectator*.

THE chapter which may seem the least exciting is perhaps the most important in connection with the "Augustan" period in our literature which we have now reached. It is the chapter which concerns the birth and the development of the English essay. So outworn has this species of composition gradually become, and so indistinguishable from the ordinary "article" of journalistic commerce, that it needs a somewhat vigorous effort of the imagination to conceive the essay as it was

in Addison's day—the most potent and the most popular factor in the rapid transformation of English society which took place between the death of Queen Mary II. in 1694 and that of her sister, Queen Anne, in 1714. Yet as regards the conduct and demeanour of our countrymen it may well be doubted whether any secular literary product has ever had such a conspicuous and immediate effect as the files of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.¹

Instruction in the rudiments of cultured

¹ In the social history of England the reign of Charles II. forms an epoch of the very first importance. In this reign, as a result of the tendencies of over a century, a term is formally put to the tyranny alike of the Crown, the theologians, and the territorial classes (the conjurors and chieftains of an earlier social state). The clergy definitely lost their power of taxing themselves and of burning their adversaries, or of destroying them almost as effectually by tendering them the *ex officio* oath. The territorial classes definitely lost their feudal rights and their original jurisdiction (through the House of Lords) in civil suits. By the Habeas Corpus Act, and by the Statute of Frauds, and the abolition of Purveyance and Pre-emption, the liberty of the subject and the security of his property were made as certain as our law could make it. And the coping stone was placed upon the modern structure of equal rights by the liberty of the Press, the independence of the judicial bench, and the concession of the principle of toleration, all of which followed immediately upon the ejection of the Stuarts in 1688.

The period of the Dutch War was followed by an unexampled growth of material prosperity, and this was fostered by the development of the funding system, the growth of a financial class (in succession to the old goldsmiths), and the institution of the Bank of England. With these innovations the Whigs, who formed the aggressive as well as the progressive party and were in favour of the extension of English prestige by foreign war, specially identified themselves. The Tories, on the other hand, were opposed to the extension of the commercial interest and the national debt; down with the army, they cried, down with the war, down with the dissenter, and out with the foreigner. Their special anxiety was that the Church of England was in danger. Both parties were united in a common hatred of Catholics. In spite of the efforts of the territorial party and the country squires (who clung fondly to the semi-feudal ideas of Clarendon and Sir Godfrey Peverel), the obvious tendency of the time was to the urbanisation of England, to the rapid development of industry and commerce, with attendant wealth and luxury, at the expense of agriculture and rusticity, and the rapid growth of London as the *depôt* of the modern world. A large but still compact town, surrounded not by vast suburban tracts, but by country villages, London, with its beautifully balanced white spires and its vast new dome, its numerous pleasure-gardens, its theatres, and coffee-houses and taverns, its coaches and its squares, its clear and stately river with its ships and swarming boats, from which were obtained the most charming views of the wooded hills by which the city was surrounded—the London of those days must have been upon the whole a decidedly agreeable place to live in. The citizens then were much more than now exclusively traders, characterised by solidity of

demeanour was what Augustan society wanted. The imperative need of a large and thoroughly urbanised population was urbanity. As in politics the desideratum had been a means of getting rid of a minister without impeaching him and sending him to the Tower, so in manners some means of reconciling fashion and virtue, industry and civil demeanour, without pulpit-threats of damnation was the talisman demanded. The town needed an introduction to the country (of which the Queen Anne "cit" knew practically nothing), the godly citizen to the man about town, the town-bred damsel to the Kit-cat toast, the Liberal merchant to the Conservative squire. Taught by a wide knowledge and varied experience of the world, by instinctive good taste, generosity of feeling and a strong natural humour, Steele diagnosed the malady of his time to a miracle, and proposed to remedy it not with formal doses of moral declamation, but by homœopathic quantities of good sense, good taste, and good-humoured morality, disguised beneath an easy and fashionable style. Addison then saw his way to reinforce his copious friend, with a more frugal but more refined endowment, with a more exquisite perception of literary propriety, and with a competent knowledge of what literature had already achieved towards the structure of social amenity, in the way of the essay by Montaigne, Bacon, Cowley, and Temple, in the way of comedy (dialogue and

manners) by Molière, Congreve, and Vanbrugh, and in the way of character-drawing by Butler and La Bruyère.

Joseph Addison was born at the parsonage of Milston, near Amesbury, on May 1st, 1672. His father, Lancelot Addison, an eminent and learned divine, served as chaplain at Tangier, wrote some account of Western Barbary, was made Dean of Lichfield in 1683, and might have been a bishop six years later but for his high-flying churchmanship. All his three sons were very successful in life, and his daughter Dorothy was a "sort of wit"; Swift sat next her at a dinner and "was not fond of her." Joseph, the eldest son, went to Charterhouse and Oxford, migrating from Queen's to Magdalen, where his excellence in Latin verse made him first a demy and then a fellow. This fondness for Latin poetry and aptitude for imitating it was to be the making of Addison. He polished up his verses so carefully that he rose to the office of Secretary (Mr. Secretary-of-State Addison). He was, of course, a proficient in complimentary verse, and his laudation of Dryden greatly pleased the old poet, who took under his patronage Addison's version of the Fourth Georgic, and introduced the young talent to Jacob Tonson, of *Miscellany* fame, the "Muses' midwife," the "father of English publishing." Tonson introduced the young Oxford poet to Somers, Montague, and Swift; more complimentary

character and by untrammelled energy and freedom. Individual freedom was complete. There were no police to speak of and no government espionage of any kind. Political and religious bigotry were much on the decline, and people of all sects and shades lived in tolerable harmony together. The cosmopolitan element was inconspicuous: travel, owing to its expensiveness, was rare—the average Londoner literally rarely went beyond the sound of Bow Bells. The gulf between the substantial citizen and the denizen of St. James's who frequented White's and occupied a seat in the House or a place under Government was a wide one, and it was emphasised by the growth of a standing army which diverted the younger sons of the nobles and gentry from "the city." The great deficiency of the townsman was imagination, spirituality, refinement, cultured or indeed civilised recreation of any kind. It is true that the raw material for town amusements was growing apace during the closing years of the seventeenth century. A relaxation from the somewhat grim regimen of the mediæval burgher may be discerned already in the growing taste for tea and coffee, for gardening and gardens, for picture-collecting, for cards and for popular music. Cricket, though it was already popular, was still almost exclusively the property of village greens in the south-eastern counties. The one great diversion of the older townsmen had been the stage—when it was not under the ban either of Churchman or Puritan. But the gross licentiousness of the Restoration comedy, with its eternal harping upon the one string of cuckoldry, had gradually revolted the soberer class who formed the majority; and the stage had wantonly played into the hands of the Nonconformist conscience, as represented by the numerous societies for the reformation of manners which sprang up literally by hundreds between 1690 and 1710—the parent society of which within fifty years of its foundation instituted over 100,000 persecutions for profaneness and debauchery. In the meantime the chief and almost the only means of satisfying the increasing demand for intellectual diversion among the more leisured classes of the *bourgeoisie* was to be found in the newspapers and gazettes which, from the time of the liberation of the Press, rapidly increased in number and variety. The methods of distribution were so rudimentary that the coffee-houses and taverns became the chief agencies for their circulation and discussion. The appetite for news and comments grew rapidly in such an atmosphere.

poems followed, and in 1699 his influential friends procured a Crown pension for Addison.¹ The pension was in lieu of a benefice. Addison, for his part, was to abstain from taking orders, and was to qualify himself for political employment by travel. The spirit in which Addison travelled is conveyed most accurately in two verses of his letter to Lord Halifax :

Poetic fields encompass me around,
And still I seem to tread on *classic ground*.

In the now famous phrase which he thus coined, Addison expresses exactly what he sought and found in Italy—a landscape to fit the numerous passages and proper names of Latin history and antiquity which he carried in his head. In this spirit he collected materials for his first prose work, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, which was issued in 1705. With a view to more immediate requirements he set himself to master French. Great must have been his disappointment when the death of William at once stopped his pension and indefinitely postponed his expectation of profitable employment. For a time his fortunes seemed at rather a low ebb. Somers and Halifax were quite out of favour; he managed to offend the "proud duke" of Somerset, who offered him a tutorship; his father died, making no provision for him. On the other hand he still retained his Magdalen fellowship, and his ability was still confided in by the Whig leaders, who were yearly making more and more a point of securing the fellowship and co-operation of literary talent. It was soon after his return to England in September, 1703, that the celebrated Kit-cat Club was founded. It was owing largely to his rising reputation as a poet among the Kit-cats that Addison owed his special commission by Godolphin to write a poem on the victory of Blenheim which should be worthy of such an occasion when the nation was in the first transports of martial enthusiasm. The result was *The Campaign*—a smooth and formal poem enough, in set couplets, but avoiding the outworn and to us ridiculous method of comparing a modern general to a biblical or Homeric hero such as Joshua or Achilles, and containing a very fine passage in which the composure of

Marlborough in directing the whirlwind of battle is compared to that of an angel—the angel who "by divine command" drove "the furious blast" which desolated England in 1703—a storm the like of which has not been recorded in this country, either before or since. The poem fulfilled its object. It strengthened the ministry, the complexion of which from Tory was rapidly becoming wholly Whig, and it secured advancement for the poet. In 1706 he was already made an under-secretary and promised the reversion of several comfortable little sinecures. His rise was greatly aided by his social qualities, his high character, nobility of sentiment, sweetness of temper, and a modesty which bordered on complete diffidence. With fools he was capable of using methods of irony, and he was known to egg on these "warm in a wrong opinion"—thus affording a nucleus of truth for Pope's unkind—

Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering teach the rest to sneer.

In 1708 he came into Parliament for Malmesbury, but of course he lost his places when the Whig rout came in 1710. Henceforth, until the production of his *Cato* in April, 1713, Addison's career is inextricably entwined with that of Richard Steele.

Steele was born in Dublin in March, 1672, his father being a well-to-do Dublin attorney, who had married in 1670 an Irish widow, Elinor Sims. He was sent to Charterhouse two years before Addison, and, like his friend, went on to Oxford, first to Christ Church, then to Merton. He enlisted in the Guards "suddenly" in 1694, without taking a degree and without giving any warning to his relatives; he was in consequence disinherited. He obtained an ensign's commission, however, in 1695, after dedicating to his colonel, Lord ("Salamander") Cutts, a poem on the death of Queen Mary; as an officer, rising soon to be captain, he astonished the town by his light heart and his dissipations, in the midst of which he wrote a little book called *The Christian Hero* (1701), which breathed the loftiest sentiments of piety and virtue: its object being, as he said, to fix upon his own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasures (for

¹ In the same year he published at Oxford the best of his Latin verses, such as those on the Peace of Ryswick in the second volume of the miscellany known as *Musæ Anglicanæ*.

an amusing portrait of the “Christian Hero” in person the reader is referred to *Esmond*. At the close of the same year he brought out a successful comedy, *The Funeral*, which was followed by *The Lying Lover* and *The Tender Husband*, plays which afford evidence of the influence of Jeremy Collier’s attacks on the immorality of the stage. *The Tender Husband* (1705) owed many “applauded strokes” to Addison, to whom Steele dedicated it in the most generous and affectionate of terms. About the same time he married a lady with an estate in Barbados, whose death in 1707 was followed by a prompt second marriage to Mary Scurlock, the “dear Prue” to whom he addressed his delightful letters. His solid talent and staunch partisanship procured him the usual *douceurs* from the Whig party. He was made gentleman-waiter to Prince George of Denmark and gazetteer (£300 a year minus a tax of £45), a post which at that time conferred almost a monopoly of official news. With the intention of making his exclusive information the backbone of a gossiping paper of his own, he started *The Tatler* on April 12th, 1709. It was a great day for journalism, that on which “careless” Dick Steele realised this fortunate conception.

Since they wrote *The Tender Husband* together in 1705, the intimacy of Steele and Addison had been cemented by frequent association, and the soil of both their minds had been fertilised by intercourse with the most original genius of the age, Jonathan Swift. Among the mock-heroic pieces with which, by a happy inspiration, Swift chose to satirise the absurdities of an age so artificial as that in which he lived, one of the most successful in taking the popular humour was a paper of ironical predictions prophesying the decease of a notorious almanac-maker and astrologer, one Partridge, signed with the name of Isaac Bickerstaff. Steele, seizing on the name and character of Partridge’s fictitious rival, turned him with much pleasantry into the editor of his new journal, the object of which was to “expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour.” As the paper went on, the element of news was gradually subordinated more and more to the familiar essay, in which from the first, while admitting that his own life was at best but

pardonable, Steele took a bold line (after Jeremy Collier) in combating the fashionable immorality of his day. Nothing could have suited the rare and delicate talent of Addison better than the opportunity now afforded him of contributing an occasional essay or round-about paper in advocacy of virtue and scorn of bad conventions to his friend’s periodical. His first paper, a perfect model of pleasantry, upon the supposed consternation of the newsmongers at the approaching peace with France, was given in the eighteenth number of *The Tatler*, during the twenty-one months of the existence of which he contributed in all 42 essays to the 271 of Steele. In these papers Steele practically initiated all the features—character-sketches, imaginary correspondence, critical papers, downright blows at duelling, gambling, foreign opera and other exotic absurdities—which were developed to such excellent purpose in *The Tatler*’s more famous successor.

At the close of 1710, as Swift observed to Stella, the *Tatlers* began to run somewhat dull and dry, and the farewell number appeared on January 2nd, 1711. The first number of *The Spectator* was given to the world on March 1st following. In appearance the two papers were not dissimilar. Both were single folio leaves in double column; both consisted of a single essay, with a Latin verse epigraph, and a tail of advertisements. Each was open to the charge preferred by an injured correspondent that they were printed on “tobacco paper” in a “scurvy letter.” The new paper, however, was published daily, and such was the “prodigious run” of the wit and learning of the authors, that it went on regularly without a break until December 6th, 1712 (No. 555). In No. 1 Addison sketched lightly, and with his own inimitable touch, that taciturn Looker-on or Spectator whose sheetful of thoughts was to appear every morning, Sundays excepted. Following this, in No. 2, Steele dashes off the little group of select friends—the immortal baronet, Sir Roger de Coverley; the Templar; Sir Andrew Freeport, the merchant; Captain Sentry; the elderly beau, Will Honeycomb; and the Clergyman, who were to make up the Spectator Club. As with *The Tatler*, the credit of the initiative, and of the success of the periodical as a going concern, belongs to Steele, while the ripest and most mature workmanship comes from the fine-gentleman partner. Such are Addison’s sketches of Will Wimble, of Sir

Roger at Westminster Abbey and at Drury Lane, and the death of the inimitable baronet, as described in a letter by Mr. Biscuit the butler. The inestimable value of *The Spectator* as a pent-house against provincial pleasantries, sham affectation, and false wit was recognised and appreciated more cordially even than in the case of *The Tatler*. Even Swift admitted that *The Spectator* was "very pretty"; Defoe allowed that its authors were applying learning and wit to the true ends for which they were given—namely, "the establishing virtue in and the shaming vice out of the world." In less than a fortnight *The Spectator* had become not merely an indispensable "part of the tea equipage," but a necessary item of a liberal education.

The Spectator may be regarded in brief as a developed and perfected *Tatler*, and informal though the general plan and administration of the paper may have been, its conscious aim was not inaccurately summed up by Addison when he described his ambition to bring "Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges to dwell at club and assemblies, at the tea-tables and in coffee-houses." The circulation of *The Spectator* must have been well over 3,000, until in August, 1712, the imposition of a halfpenny stamp and consequent increase in price from one penny to twopence reduced it to little more than a half of that number. We do not know precisely why it was brought to a close in December, 1712, to the keen regret of a very large body of readers; but its ashes were rekindled and the fugitive folios collected and revised in book form (2 vols. 8vo, 1712-13). Of the 555 numbers of the original series Addison wrote 274 (distinguished by one of the four capital letters at the foot, C., L., I., or O.), Steele 236 (R. and T.), and the remaining contributors, Eustace Budgell, John Hughse, and others, the balance of 45. The respective merit of the shares of Addison and Steele in the periodical has been a favourite subject for academic discussion. The fluctuating balance has been well steadied by Mr. Austin Dobson, who says: "The primary invention, the creative idea, came from Steele, the shaping power, the decorative craft, from Addison. . . . Addison's papers are faultless in their art, and in this way achieve a success which is beyond the reach of Steele's quicker and more impulsive nature." On the other hand they sometimes repel us by their restraint

and absence of spontaneity and glow. What there is no doubt about is that for a space of forty years, from 1710, the united efforts of these two men raised the essay to be the most popular and the most potent instrument of communication between the brain and the heart of a great people.

With the perfection of the prose style which was to enshrine their essays, Addison and Steele had both performed the really durable part of their work. The remainder of their lives may be told in comparatively few words. A successor was designed for *The Spectator* in *The Guardian*, to which Addison continued to contribute, but Steele's new venture soon got entangled in party politics, and *The Englishman*, which followed, was a violent partisan, from whose opinions Addison found it incumbent on him to secede. He was occupied with the completion of his correct but passionless and mechanical tragedy of *Cato* (1713), which he had commenced during his travels. This bombastic piece was acclaimed as a masterpiece both at home and in France. Its success marks the climax of Addison's good fortune. Henceforth his political composure alienated Swift on one side and Steele on the other. His unexpressed claim to be primate of English literature excited the malignity of Pope. His marriage to the Dowager Countess of Warwick in 1716 procured him a secretaryship, but not much domestic happiness, and his secretaryship proved irksome. He had "too beautiful an imagination to make a man of business"; he was no speaker, his solitary attempt to orate in the House being a complete fiasco; and he resigned his office after a few months with a cheerful alacrity on a pension of £1,500 per annum. This was in March, 1718. His health was already failing, and his estrangement from Steele was completed by Steele's attacks in *The Plebeian* (March, 1719) and his contemptuous replies in *The Old Whig*. His asthma returned shortly after this, and with it the dropsy. He died, aged forty-seven, at Holland House, on June 17th, 1719, leaving by the Countess one daughter, who survived until 1797. His body, after lying in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, was buried by night in Westminster Abbey. A splendid threnody was written by his devoted admirer, Thomas Tickell.

At considerable risk and danger to himself,



From the Painting by Dahl.

Joseph Addison

after quitting the neutral zone of politics to which *The Spectator* and Addison had committed him, Steele had done his best to ensure the Hanoverian succession (at a time when a pamphlet was a thing of power) in his pamphlet called *The Crisis* (January, 1714), the danger being the supposed tendency of the Tories to dally with the Pretender. When George I. was settled on his throne, Steele was accordingly made a J.P. and a D.L., a surveyor of the royal stable and a supervisor of the T.R., Drury lane. From these posts he derived an income little if at all inferior to Addison's pension. He also became an M.P. and was knighted, went on projecting periodicals and writing pamphlets, and produced a somewhat solemn comedy, *The Conscious Lovers* (1722), which he dedicated to George I. (500 guineas). In spite of the success of this he was still constitutionally incapable of keeping pace with his creditors. Finally he made a composition with them and retired to Car-marthen, where he died on September 1st, 1729, aged fifty-eight. His two sons, Richard and Eugene, died in 1716 and 1723. A natural

daughter was at one time contracted to the erratic Richard Savage.¹

Though he cannot rank with Addison as a great stylist, Steele was a master of that unembarrassed manner which is "the outcome of unembarrassed matter." He writes, as a rule, less from the head than from the heart. With a free and genial humour he combined a deep and genuine love of virtue, which he expressed in lay sermons among the most perfect of their kind. "As the first painter of domesticity the modern novel owes him much, but the women of his own day owe him more. Not only did he pay them collectively a magnificent compliment when he wrote of Lady Elizabeth Hastings that to love her was a liberal education; but in a time when they were treated by the wits with contemptuous flattery or cynical irreverence, he sought to offer them a reasonable service of genuine respect which was immeasurably superior to those fulsome raptures, guilty impressions, senseless deifications and pretended deaths with which it was the custom of his contemporaries to insult their understandings."

¹ As Parnell's importance derives from the influence his work exercised over Goldsmith, so Savage's is due almost exclusively to the impression his verse and his conversation made upon Dr. Johnson during the most impressionable portion of his London career. According to his own account, which must seemingly have contained elements of truth, Richard Savage was the infant baptised on January 18th, 1697, at St. Andrew's, Holborn, as Richard Smith, being in reality the bastard son of Earl Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield. This lady treated him with inveterate cruelty according to his own somewhat perplexed account, apprenticed him to a cobbler and tried to get him punished with the supreme penalty for an unpremeditated homicide in a midnight brawl. Savage procured his release owing to the intervention of several persons of quality. Henceforth he continued brawling and embroidering his strange story for most of the remainder of his stormy life. He lost all his friends save Johnson by his excesses, and produced little to justify his claims to genius. His tragedy, *Sir Thomas Overbury* (1723), was a failure, and whatever of merit his versification has is to be found in his two heroic poems, *The Bastard* (1728) and *The Wanderer*, in which he moralises more or less poetically upon his own personal misfortunes. A veritable depth of feeling transpires *The Bastard* and informs the rhythm with a rugged solemnity of which many an echo may be found in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. Having outlived or tired out his most generous patrons, such as Lord Tyrconnel, Queen Caroline, Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs. Pope, Savage died in prison on August 1st, 1743.

CHAPTER X

MAT PRIOR, GAY, AND OTHER PERFORMERS IN THE SCHOOL OF POPE

"Whatever Prior touched in the light style became golden ; and the gay good-humour of the experienced, disenchanted man of affairs makes the reader feel how great must have been the charm of his company, which, according to the report of the Duchess of Portland—'noble, lovely, little Peggy'—caused him to be beloved by every living thing in the house, master, child, and servant, human creature or animal."—COURTHOPE, *A History of English Poetry*.

The familiar style of Prior and Gay—Parnell—Pomfret—Garth—Philips—Akenside—Young.

MATTHEW, or MAT, PRIOR is commonly believed to have been the son of a carpenter at Wimborne, where he was born on July 21st, 1664. His father died when he was yet a child, and he fell to the care of his uncle, Sam Prior, a vintner, who kept the Rhenish wine-house, a fashionable resort as far back as Pepys's time, in Channel Row, Westminster.

Mat's quickness procured his promotion to a seat behind the bar ; and when it was discovered by the Earl of Dorset, Sir Fleetwood Shepherd, and other fashionable frequenters that the youth had a happy knack of translating Horace, he was not unnaturally regarded as somewhat of a prodigy. Dorset contributed to his expenses at Westminster, where he became a King's scholar under Busby and made the acquaintance of Charles Montague, afterwards the noted Earl of Halifax. He refused to be separated from his friend and sent to Christ Church, and was, in defiance of tradition, entered at St. John's College, Cambridge (April, 1683), where he was elected a fellow in 1688. In the previous year, in conjunction with Montague, he brought out *The City Mouse and Country Mouse*, an amusing skit in ridicule of Dryden's *Hind and Panther*. These achievements were the making of Prior. His fellowship (like Addison's) sustained him when his party was in the cold shade of opposition. His poetic talent, as shown in the satire, procured him almost instant preferment, for although he complained that the other mouse

was advanced first, he had not to wait long. It must be said of the nobles who grew up when Charles II. was king, that no other generation has ever shown itself so responsive to literary talent. In 1691 he was sent as secretary of embassy to The Hague Congress, an assembly of princes and nobles to which Europe then had scarcely, perhaps, seen anything equal. Prior's countenance and address so commended themselves to William III. on this occasion that the King made him a gentleman of his bed-chamber.

In 1694 the death of Queen Mary furnished a theme for every one who could write at all. Prior wrote a long ode, which was presented to the King, by whom it was not likely to be ever read. In two years he was once more in diplomatic employment, at Ryswick and then at Paris, as secretary to the embassy. In 1701 he became M.P. for East Grinstead, and henceforth, like Swift later, he veered rapidly over to the Tories, into the inner circle of which he was rapidly admitted, joining the "16 Brothers" Club of Swift, Harley, and Bolingbroke in 1710. In the same year the Tories came in, and Prior was called back to his old task of treaty-making. He and M. Mesnager did most of the real work preliminary to the Treaty of Utrecht, and when it was signed in 1713, Prior, who had hitherto performed the duties, was promoted to the style and title of English Ambassador at Paris. He returned in March, 1715, to find his enemies in power, and was welcomed by a warrant for his

arrest. He was confined for two years, during which period he wrote his tedious poem in three long octosyllabic cantos called *Alma, or The Progress of the Mind*. When he came out, Harley, Swift and other friends encouraged him to bring out his collected poems in a subscription folio. This was done, and procured the impecunious poet £4,000, to which Harley added another £4,000 for the purchase of an estate at Down Hall (celebrated in the ballad), near Hatfield Broad Oak, in Essex. Unhappily his health was already failing; he had a chronic cough, and, like Swift, he suffered from deafness. He died at Harley's seat of Wimpole, where he was on a visit, on September 18th, 1721.

Many of Prior's best poems are short pieces, little more than epigrams, which survive as models of neatness, to be praised perhaps beyond their intrinsic worth, as pioneer work deserves to be, by such masters of the peculiar *genre* (*vers d'occasion*) as Cowper, Thackeray, Locker, and Dobson. No less than fifteen of his short familiar poems find their way into the *Lyra Elegantiarum*.

Though his importance has been a good deal over-rated, Prior remains an interesting figure in English literature, coming as he does between Dryden and Pope. His ideas of finish are by no means up to the Popean standard. As to metre, he tells us that our rhyming heroic measure, as Dryden perfected it, is too confined. He accordingly made a point of running his verses and couplets into one another, and by this means, and a spirited use of the parenthesis and the paragraph, he produced some good and novel effects. Pope almost simultaneously was pulling in exactly the opposite direction. As a matter of fact, however, he often approximates his "Brother" Swift much more nearly than he ever does Pope. He got ideas from Swift, and imitated his octosyllabics as Swift imitated Butler's. Swift is harder, stronger, and more precise; Prior much more easy, natural, gentleman-like, good-natured, and pleasant.

John, youngest son of William Gay, was baptised at Barnstaple Old Church on September 16th, 1685. In London, after leaving a shop, he found an abettor in his old school-mate Aaron Hill and another in a Westminster Hall bookseller, who in May, 1708, brought out his poem as *Wine*, suggested by the *Cyder* of John Philips. It was followed by a topical but unacted play on the subject of *The Mohocks*, a tragi-comical farce of 1712. To-

wards the close of this same year Gay became secretary, or "domestic steward" (a kind of Malvolio), in the household of the Duchess of Monmouth, widow of the would-be usurper, who met with such a tragical fate in 1685. In January, 1713, he inscribed to Pope, as the first of contemporary songsters, his trim Georgic called *Rural Sports*. It is a smooth reflection of Pope's own pastoral, saturated in the false sentiment and poetic diction, so called, of the period, and replete with feather'd choirs and finny broods (it contains, indeed, a minute and rather grotesque description of fly-fishing). In poetic taste Pope was accepted by Gay as an unfailing mentor, and it was with this express encouragement that he went on in December to give to the world another heroic poem in three books on that "agreeable machine" *The Fan*; and his next work of any importance is his pleasing *The Shepherd's Week*, in six pastorals (April 15th, 1714). These "pastorals" were written originally to cast ridicule upon those of "Namby-Pamby" Philips (Gay was a born parodist), but they contain so much comic humour and droll portraiture of country life that they were soon popular on their own merits as rural poems. The grotesque portions (like those of Greene's pastorals) help to conceal the flimsiness of the texture, while the scheme of the Calendar approved itself strongly to Allan Ramsay, and later on to Crabbe.

Gay's pastorals do not seem, however, to have appealed to the heart of his lady, for in the summer of 1714 he was "turned off," and would have been in a bad case but for the kindness of distinguished literary friends. Swift procured him a secretaryship on an embassy, and when this appointment was cancelled, upon the death of Anne, Pope asked him down to Binfield. While here he wrote, with some hints from Pope and Arbuthnot, a satirical "tragi-comi-pastoral farce" called *What d'ye Call It?* in which he gives us a distinct foretaste of his clever light librettist vein and his happy knack for a ballad ("Black-eyed Susan" and "Twas when the seas were roaring" are both his). It ridiculed a number of the plays in vogue after the manner of *The Rehearsal*, and Gay lost a friend in an offended dramatist, Richard Steele. He gained a hundred pounds. Next year he composed what is probably his best-remembered poem, *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London* (published by Lintot, January 26th, 1716), an elaborate

imitation and expansion of Swift's *City Shower* and the same poet's uncompromising *Morning*. The idea is good, the verse neat, and the mock heroics are admirable; but the poem owes its fame to its quotability as a photographic picture of London streets in 1715.

In 1720 he collected and published his poems in two large-quarto subscription volumes, and turned £1,000 by the venture, which he proceeded to invest *en bloc* in South Sea Stock. For a moment he was the nominal holder of £20,000 worth, but the crash came and reduced him to "beggary." Meanwhile he had become a more or less regular inmate in the household of Prior's Kitty, the "blooming Hyde with eyes so rare" of his own prologue to *The Shepherd's Week*, who had in 1720 become Duchess of Queensberry.

In 1722 he obtained a small sinecure of £150 a year as a lottery commissioner, and soon began writing for Prince William (afterwards "Butcher" Cumberland) his famous series of *Fables*. The difficulty of polishing such trifles (as Cowper knew, and tells us in his letters) is inconceivable. It cannot be said that Gay's standard was an inordinately high one, yet it was 1727 before the *Fables* were published by Tonson. Their novelty and ease ensured them an enormous success, which lasted well over one hundred years, and has only begun to wane during the last forty. Yet, apart from one or two specimens supplied by Cowper, they are still the best fables we possess in English verse; nor would it be easy for any fabulist to better *The Hare with many Friends*, a charming *fabliau* with a touch of personal application quite in the manner of the early masters. Gay's *Fables* suffer only in comparison with those of La Fontaine. Compared with the immortal "bonhomme," Gay took little trouble with his work. His *Fables* resembled his *Shepherd's Week* in the fact that, although much applauded, they failed to secure him any permanent advancement.

Gay's next venture was *The Beggars' Opera*, which may be described, without exaggeration, as the first popular success of the modern English stage. It ran for the unprecedented (though not uninterrupted, as has been assumed) space of sixty-two days in London, and then travelled in triumph to the country and even to the Colonies. Like so many *jeux d'esprit* of the epoch, it was suggested by Swift, who once remarked to Gay "that a Newgate pas-

toral might make an odd, pretty sort of thing," and Gay wrote it at Twickenham, in the same house with Pope and Swift, whose opinion was it was either very bad or very good. It was given at the Lincoln's Inn Fields house on January 29th, 1728. As so often in comic opera, it was one of the numbers—

O ponder well! be not severe—

that turned the scale and made it an intoxicating success, out of which Gay gleaned some £800. A sequel was prohibited, but printed.

Gay's later years were uneventfully spent in the houses of his faithful patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, at Amesbury and at Burlington Gardens. The Duchess looked after his little comforts, and the Duke invested his savings for him, so that when he died (intestate) some £6,000 was divided between his sisters. After an idle life of undeserved good fortune and much unmanly repining, he died of an inflammation, in spite of the skilled care of Arbuthnot and the unwearying solicitude of his Duchess, on December 4th, 1732. On the night of December 23rd he was interred like a peer of the realm in Westminster Abbey, having as pall-bearers the Earl of Chesterfield, Viscount Cornbury, Mr. Pope, and three other distinguished persons. An imposing monument bears his flippant couplet:

Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I thought so once, and now I know it.

Far less original than either Prior or Gay was the crowd of scholars and gentlemen who wrote with ease, and who adopted for the most part with equal facility the canons and conventions of the magnetic "Mr. Pope." Among them we must certainly enumerate Parnell, Pomfret, Garth, Philips, and Tickell, leaving the more original work of Akenside and Young to conclude the chapter.

Thomas Parnell (1679—1718) was born and educated in Dublin, took orders in 1700, and became six years later Archdeacon of Clogher. He thus came to know Swift, who greatly promoted Parnell's interests, until the date of the poet's early death at Chester in 1718. Parnell's life shows us an easy-tempered, kind-hearted, yet querulous and self-indulgent man, who had rarely a motive higher than to gratify himself. His ambition was to attain to a metropolitan pulpit, where he could have added the reputation of a popular preacher to

that of being the *protégé* of Swift and the pet of the Scriblerus Club. The character of his poetry is in keeping with the temperament of the man. It is slipshod, easy, and indifferently pleasing. If never really original, he has the art of enunciating commonplaces with a certain felicity and grace. The stories he relates are old, but his manner of telling them is new. His thoughts and images are for the most part transported from his commonplace book; but he utters them with an ease of manner and a naturalness which almost tempt one to credit them to Parnell alone. Their chief merit, perhaps, is to have delighted (and pointed the way to) Goldsmith. Parnell's most popular poem is *The Hermit*, a smoothly told apologue (told for the fiftieth time or more: it occurs in the *Gesta Romanorum*) common to many languages and peoples, illustrating the inscrutable justice (if justice it be) of divine providence. His *Elegy to an Old Beauty* contains the now proverbial phrase about "pretty Fanny's way."

As Swift on Parnell, so Addison reflects a ray of gentle light on Thomas Tickell (1686—1740). He was born at Bridekirk, and, like a good Cumberland man, went to Queen's College, Oxford; there he first knew Mr. Addison, at whose invitation he sent papers to *The Spectator*. With the temerity of genius (which he certainly did not possess) he brought out a version of the first book of *The Iliad* almost exactly simultaneously with Pope, and the "Whig dogs" had the indecency to say it was the better of the two; this was the *fons et origo* of the famous quarrel between Addison and Pope. Tickell clung to Addison to the last, as under-secretary (1717), as literary executor, and finally as elegist. The elegy which he prefixed to the collective edition of Addison's works in 1721 is certainly one of the noblest exercises in set and formal heroic couplets of the Popean rhythm that exists in our language. Tickell also wrote a ballad of *Colin and Lucy*, marred by one or two absurdities, but surprisingly effective and strong for the taste of the time. He continued in official employment after Addison's death, died at Bath, and was buried at Glasnevin, where he had his home. Tickell's diapason was severely limited; he had only three or four notes; these notes were true, not metallic, as so much of this imitative work is, but rich and pure.

John Pomfret (1667—1702), rector of Maul-

den, in Bedfordshire, is known chiefly for his unexpected appearance as a poet in Johnson's *Lives* and Southey's strangely unprovoked query, "Why is Pomfret's *Choice* the most popular poem in the English language?" As a matter of fact, it lingered in elegant extracts and choice specimens, just as some of Longfellow's minor effusions do at the present day. *The Choice* is a commonplace copy of verse upon a theme the most threadbare (it was very popular in Elizabethan times, and vastly better treated). His neatest verses are those addressed *To a Friend inclined to Marry*.

Sir Samuel Garth (1661—1719) was one of the leading physicians of his day, and a make-weight as regards literary eminence to Arbuthnot and Radcliffe. He was a famous Kit-cat and a good classic; but he lingers on in literary history merely as the author of *The Dispensary* (1699), a mock-heroic poem in six cantos, modelled to some extent upon Boileau's *Lutrin*, and criticising the universe in general, but more particularly defending the College of Physicians against the pretensions and aggressions of the confraternity of apothecaries. He continued to enjoy the friendship both of Pope and Addison (for whose *Cato* he wrote a once-popular *Epilogue*), was knighted by George I., and, dying on January 18th, 1719, was buried at Harrow.

Another member of Addison's circle was Ambrose Philips (1675—1749), a native of Shropshire, who was educated at St. John's, Cambridge, and made his début as a poet in the same year and in the same volume as Pope, his pastorals being the first and Pope's the last in Tonson's *Miscellany* for 1709. Gay's parodies in *The Shepherd's Week* were modelled upon these pastoral philippics. They were also the vehicle of a deadly insult inflicted on Pope, whose own pastorals Tickell declared that he considered inferior to those of Ambrose.

Pretending to criticise the rival pastorals and compare them, Pope gives the preference to Philips; but quotes all his worst passages as his best, and places by the side of them his own finest lines, which he says want rusticity, and often deviate into downright poetry. The satire hurt, as it was meant to, and Philips bought a rod and hung it up at a popular coffee-house (Button's) in order to carry out his threatened chastisement of Pope in public. The encounter was averted by Pope's prudence.

Philips played his cards sufficiently well to

extract some very fair Irish sinecures from the dominant Whig party, but he did not live to "enjoy them." The poems of Philips which please best, says Dr. Johnson, are "those which from Pope or Pope's adherents procured him the name of Namby-Pamby, the poems of short lines by which he paid his court to all ages and characters, from Walpole, the steerer of the realm, to Miss Pulteney in the nursery."

But the machinations of Pope managed to raise a perfect storm of ridicule, which broke over the new versification, as it was called, in numberless parodies and broadsides.

In spite of all the ridicule, however, Philips had a genuine sensibility and a kindness for the elder music in English poetry which his age for the most part ignored. Thus, in 1723 he brought out *A Collection of Old Ballads*, including *Robin Hood*, *Johnny Armstrong*, and the famous *Children in the Wood* so much belauded by Addison. The ballads are mostly bad versions derived from current broadsides; but the collection, such as it was, was the first of its kind. His only play of any note, *The Distressed Mother*, was derived immediately from Racine's *Andromaque*. He died in Hanson Street, London, on June 18th, 1749.

One of the best rhetoricians who came in the wake of Pope was Mark Akenside, the son of a respectable butcher of the dissenting persuasion at Newcastle-on-Tyne. *The Gentleman's Magazine* encouraged his poetic ambition when he was a mere boy, publishing a philippic by him against the Spaniards in 1738. He seems to have studied assiduously, without making much effort to acquire practice as a surgeon; and in 1743 he submitted to Dodsley (who had succeeded Tonson as publisher of poetry) his long blank-verse poem on *The Pleasures of the Imagination*.

By the Pleasures of the Imagination Akenside intended to identify what in modern philosophy would be classified under the heading of "æsthetic emotions"—that is, the pleasurable feelings aroused by historical reverie or by the contemplation of the beauties of nature and art. His conception was based mainly upon the *Characteristics* of Shaftesbury and upon certain of Addison's essays in *The Spectator*. There is great loftiness of sentiment in Akenside, together with a passionate love for liberty and a pious devotion to the records of antiquity (savagely ridiculed by Smollett in *Peregrine*

Pickle). The fatal defect in all his poetry is the prosaic quality of the verse. Much of it (note especially the episode of Pisistratus at the beginning of Book III.) is literally prose cut up into lengths; and he keeps his eyes fixed always not on Shakespeare, but on Pope—and not on Pope's best qualities, but on his artificial diction. The Georgian Pindar (as he fancied himself, says Smollett) died on June 23rd, 1770, *æt.* 48. Johnson says of him, with a sense that is more than single, "He is to be commended as having fewer artifices of disgust than most of his brethren of the blank song."

Edward, son of Edward and Judith Young, was born in June, 1683, at Upham, a little village near Winchester; his father was rector of the parish, and Canon of Salisbury. From Winchester, where John Philips, author of *The Splendid Shilling*, was a schoolfellow, Young went to New College; in 1705-6 the death of his father, and the spectacle of the death-strewn field of Ramilies, left a deep and sombre impression on his mind; in 1708 he obtained a law fellowship at All Souls'. His poem on *The Last Day*, of 1713, tiresome as the emphasis of it is, attracted much attention from the essayists. His tragedies, written under the influence of the mantle of Nat Lee, *Busiris* and *The Revenge* (1719-21), are full of dreary rant and windy declamation, though the last gave to the stage the part of Zanga, a Moor, who was almost as popular as Othello until the revival of Shakespeare under Garrick. His satires on Fame, *The Universal Passion*, which appeared between 1725 and 1728, have little of the personal application of those of Dryden and Pope, and have more affinity with the satiric characters of La Bruyère. Written in smooth and often very effective heroic couplets, they clearly prepared the way for Pope's *Essays in Satire* which have now so entirely eclipsed them. For a time they were immensely popular, and Johnson said of them that the "distichs have the weight of solid sentiment," while the "points have the sharpness of resistless truth." The antithetic style which we now regard as almost inseparable from the ten-syllable couplet owes much to Young. But his most noted poem, the *Night Thoughts*, 1742-4, hardly ever read now except under compulsion, but still notorious in France and Germany as well as England and Scotland, is written in sonorous blank verse after the pattern of Thomson and Philips. The original

motive of the poem is similar to that of *In Memoriam*—a threnodic complaint—but the strange duality of Young as courtier and curate, worldly and divine in one, stamps the work. No age paid its poets so well as the eighteenth century, and Young was intent on making a goodly sum out of his sorrows and his sublimities. And the author of "Fondness for fame is avarice of air," and "Man wants but little, nor that little long," had no intention whatsoever of being taken too literally. One of his ideas in writing, no doubt, was to produce a corrective to the theories of the *Essay on Man*, and the poet grew more didactic and less elegiac as he went on. The influence of the poem upon the diffusion of poetic melancholy has undoubtedly been very widespread, and may be seen in Blair (*The Grave*), Gray, Collins, Ossian, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Klopstock, Leopardi, and many others. The *Nuits* was a favourite work of the gentle

Robespierre and the sentimental Desmoulins. The poet died at the pretty village of Welwyn, on the borders of Knebworth Chace, where he had been rector since 1730, and where he had written most of the *Thoughts*, on April 4th, 1765. There he was buried by the side of his wife, Lady Elizabeth (a granddaughter of Charles II.). Young is famous for his epigrams: "Procrastination is the thief of time," "A fool at forty is a fool indeed," and

For her own breakfast she'll project a scheme,
Nor take her tea without a stratagem.

Less familiar is the charming elegiac use he makes of reverberating his epithets:

Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet!
And young as beautiful! and soft as young!
And gay as soft! and innocent as gay!
And happy (if aught happy here) as good!

Here is very clearly the craftsmanship of a true poet.¹

¹ There is a good text of Prior's works in the Cambridge English Classics, 1905, and the Select Poems of Prior were edited by Dobson, 1889. Gay has been edited for the Muses' Library by Underhill. There is a notable *étude* of Edward Young, *Sa Vie et ses Œuvres*, by W. Thomas, 1901. His *Works* were edited by Nichols in 1854. An over-severe comparison between Young and Cowper was instituted by George Eliot in an essay called *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness*, reprinted in *Essays from "The Westminster Review"* of 1857.

BOOK V
MORALS AND MEMOIRS

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL

Henry Fielding.

Our English novel's pioneer,
His was the eye that first saw clear
How, not in natures self-effaced
By cant of Fashion and of Taste,—
Not in the circle of the great,
Faint-blooded and exanimate,—
Lay the true field of Jest and Whim
Which we to-day reap after him.

No :—he stepped lower down, and took
The piebald People for his Book.

Ah, what a wealth of Life there is
In that large laughing page of his !
What store and stock of Common-Sense
Wit, Wisdom, Books, Experience !

—AUSTIN DOBSON.

"I never saw Johnson really angry with me but once," says Hannah More. "I alluded to some witty passage in *Tom Jones*." He replied, "I am shocked to hear you quote from so vicious a book. I am sorry to hear you have read it ; a confession which no modest lady should ever make."

Richardson and Fielding.

THE novel of to-day envelops us so completely and has become such a pervasive element of the very air our minds breathe, that we do not stop to inquire into its character and properties. People recognise the four time-honoured oceans which envelop the two hemispheres of history and theology, philosophy and poetry. They would not dream of embarking upon any of these unprovided with a chart and a compass ; while they still regard prose fiction as an inland sea, comparatively shallow, and safe to navigate according to rule of thumb, by means of well-recognised landmarks. But prose fiction is no longer a mere inlet ; it has developed into a mighty ocean, and has already obliterated many of the old literary coast-lines. In antiquity, strictly speaking, prose fiction is only inferior to verse fiction. But it is only since 1700 that it has developed with a perfectly amazing rapidity to meet the complex, and at the same time urgent needs of expression of by far the most varied, permanent, artificial, and costly society that the world, so far as we know, has ever seen. The novel, as we have it at the present day, may be said in a general way to date from the early Brunswick period in English history from 1719 to 1742. It seems to require an old, large, deep-rooted, many-

sided, highly complex civilisation to produce a prose fiction of the first order. Only two modern nations up to the present have been able to achieve it : and those two, as it happens, nations poles apart in thought and habit, though only separated geographically by a strait twenty miles wide. The novel has become the vehicle of every type of idea, moral, social, intellectual, and æsthetic ; and in the two great schools referred to prose fiction has become the great missionary in the one case of the Anglo-Saxon, in the other of the Franco-Latin order of ideas. The whole literary soil seems to need long preparation for the novel to flourish in anything like perfection. Its full development is conditioned by a gradually matured national, social, and literary environment, in which novelty is balanced by tradition, variety by uniformity. A library of old novels is an appalling necropolis, for an enormous number of bad ones have to be written, it appears, for one good one to emerge. In the course of this process, both in French and English literature, the novel has become supreme over every other kind of literary composition. This is conspicuously the case in England, where the Puritan temper broke both music and the drama as popular amusements. The novel has remained, im-

pervious to all attacks, adapted in an almost providential manner to our national habits and special requirements in these later days, until, popularly speaking, a novel has become almost synonymous with "a book." The exuberance of the novel and its comparative indifference to form have endeared it to the national genius; while we feel it to be peculiarly our own, inasmuch as there is no exact counter-

part to it in the antique world. Unlike most forms of literary art it has not already been practised with a perfection to which we can scarcely ever hope to attain by some old Hellenic master. For ages, without a doubt, the novel existed and assumed a variety of shapes, but remained unwritten. The first definite traces of it in literary history betray a highly sophisticated form.¹

¹ Thus the novel, as we first catch a glimpse of it in Herondas, Apuleius, and Petronius, has none of the features of a rudimentary species of literature. It is highly developed, complex, and, one might almost say, rotten. After its rapid decay and the deluge of barbarism, classical civilisation had a kind of Indian summer at Alexandria; and Alexandria in the fifth century was the home of a brilliant school of Greek romancists. There short novels of romantic travel-adventure and thwarted love had a short vogue, and were soon submerged by the predominant militarism and ecclesiasticism of the early Middle Ages. But even in their decline they sent forth a number of sunset rays which have illuminated fiction, and have been reflected so often that they may be said indirectly to have influenced the whole of it. After a long period of more primitive life the novel emerges again towards the end of the middle ages in the romances of chivalry, and this style of romance is henceforth to form the central theme of fiction. It was the tendency of these romances to cluster round the names of two or three illustrious personages such as Arthur and Charlemagne. They were, in fact, developed by minstrels from the mythical narratives of the early historians, with a strong infusion of enchantments imported by the Crusaders from the East, and by the Spaniards from the Moors. They acquired the name of "romance" because the romance language or vernacular of Gaul, as opposed to the Latin, was the *lingua franca* of the chief *trouvères*. The earliest of these romances extant, of the twelfth and thirteenth century, are in metrical form. Long passages in prose were, however, often interpolated, and the prose romance soon became popular, more particularly in the home—not of its nativity, but of its adoption—the Spanish peninsula, where the most famous of all these romances, the *Amadis de Gaul*, was written by Montalvo about 1470, and printed at Seville some forty years later. Amongst the rivals and successors of *Amadis* it will suffice to mention *Palmerin of England*. The names of many of the most celebrated are enumerated in the early chapters of *Don Quixote*, himself the last of these chivalric conquerors. A subordinate type of chivalric romance was the pastoral romance, for which examples sprang up towards the end of the fifteenth century. The admiration of classical idylls brought about by the revival of learning made it natural that romances of this order embellished with poetry, idyllic landscape, and a double portion of amorous sentiment should be grafted upon the heroic romance proper. The great masters of this type of romance were Sannazaro (1458—1530), Montemayor (d. 1561), Guarini, and Tasso. Both these kinds of romance, the heroic and the pastoral, found numerous imitators in England and France.

Scarcely inferior in the influence which they exercised upon the complex novel of the present day are two further types of fiction evolved by the late Middle Ages. These two are first the novelettes as developed by Italian stylists from the popular stories current in the Middle Ages, and collected together in such *recueils* as the *Gesta Romanorum*, or from the popular metric *fabliaux* of the gleemen and minstrels. These stories are frequently given a very licentious and ribald turn by the Italian wits who re-created them. The chief of these were Boccaccio, Sacchetti, Ser Giovanni, Straparola, Massuccio, Bandello, and Cinthio. Their *historiettes* were poured out from all the presses of Western Europe during the sixteenth century, and had a profound influence upon the development of English fiction. Still more immediate was their effect upon the English romantic drama. From Chaucer to Dryden the influence of the *Decameron* is visible in almost every department of our literature. From Burton's *Anatomy* we learn that one of the favourite amusements of our ancestors was the reading of Boccaccio aloud. Shakespeare, as we know, had recourse to these Italian stories, over and over again, for his plots. Beaumont and Fletcher were equally obliged to them, and to the lighter stories of Cinthio, Bandello, and their French imitators (notably, of course, the *Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* and the *Heptameron*). These repertoires are extremely interesting, as being the scenes of the reconstruction, in new and diverting forms, of the numerous stories, in Protean shapes, from the dawn of civilisation down to the *fabliaux* of the *trouvères*. In literature, as in most things, the form is continually changing, whilst the substance, for the most part, remains unaltered.

The serious and the merry tales, which had been served up so many times on the English stage, as tragedy and comedy, gradually lost their popularity, but the substance of the stories was still doing its duty, and the débris of their Renaissance setting still meets the literary explorer and archæologist at almost every turn.

During the seventeenth century, the primacy in prose fiction was transferred from Italy and Spain to France. The large households and gregarious methods of life in the French châteaux, while château life still flourished in France (before the centripetal tendency of the *ancien régime* had absorbed all interest and activity in the central focus of the court, as it began to do from 1662 onwards) made them a very favourable nursery for the cultivation of the long-winded romance. These heroic and historical romances were a natural

In the literature of the seventeenth century, though romances, novels, and picarescos proper are decidedly rare in England, there are to be found in plenty hints, premonitions, tentative approaches to what was afterwards to be the novel. Such were the character-writings of Overbury, Earle, and their numerous imitators, whose work was frequently imitated or annexed by satirists and descriptive letter-writers. Such, again, were the great prose moralities of Bunyan, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* being a better example of this

than *Pilgrim's Progress* itself. Such, again, were the full, interesting, and minute autobiographies which were now beginning to spring up in our literature and to interest the public, not as the doings of magnates, but as the diverting self-revelations of common egoistic men. The positive critical and satirical temper of the age of the Restoration and of the Royal Society is seen more and more in all these productions as the seventeenth century approaches its close. The near approach of the modern novel is indicated even more clearly in the

development from the romances of chivalry, the heroes in both cases being knights who combat for the love of honour, and the honour of love; and the operations in both cases are traced out at enormous length.

The chief writers of this species of romance during the seventeenth century were Gomberville, La Calprenède, and Madame Scudéry; their favourite topics were fictitious exploits, by heroes of antiquity—Scipio, Cyrus, Brutus, Juba, Cleopatra, and the like. One of the most notorious, the *Clélie* of Madame Scudéry, containing the famous *Curte du Pays de Tendre*, was concerning the history of Rome in the last days of the kings. The narrative part of these romances is extravagant and tedious in the extreme; what commended them specially to the taste of their contemporaries was, no doubt, to a large extent, their utility as manuals of conversation, in which Madame Scudéry specially excelled; and secondly their veiled references to notorious personages of the day, which were seldom missing from these romances. Keys, in fact, were often written to elucidate this hidden meaning. These heroic romances may be described as the dominant type of the fiction of the seventeenth century. There were, however, subsidiary forms of the heroic romance, such as the political and the comic, represented by the well-known *Roman Comique* of Scarron and the *Amusemens* of Dufresny; and allied to this last form were a number of comic or satiric imaginary travels, which took a new lease of life at the close of the seventeenth century with the famous *Turkish Spy*. At the same time the novelette obtained a new popularity, through the importation into Europe of *The Arabian Nights*, first translated by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717, still in the full bloom of youth and novelty, as far as the Western world was concerned. The chief rival of the heroic romance during the seventeenth century was, however, the Rogue novel, which had its origin in the Spain of Philip II. These little books were sold for the most part in dwarf duodecimos, and could hardly contest for supremacy with the ladies, though they were much sold to suit the pockets of the sterner sex. Tabooed though it was by the serious, the picaresque romance (so called from the fact that the *picaro* or scamp is always the main character of the narrative) enjoyed a popularity from the close of the sixteenth century, which destroyed the novelettes and the euphuistic tales, and seriously menaced the long-winded ideal romances. The great original of this class of literature was the *Lazarillo de Tormes* of Hurtado de Mendoza, published in 1553. Imitations abounded, the most notable being Aleman's *Life of Guzman de Alfarache* (1599) and Quevedo's more humorous *Life of Paul the Sharper*. In France Charles Sorel essayed a work of the same genre in his *Histoire Comique de Francion* of 1622; Nash had attempted an imitation as early as 1594; even in Germany the influence of the *picaro* was felt, as is witnessed by Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus* of 1668. Most of the imitations, however, were sad failures, and England, at least, was better content with versions from the original Spanish.

The rogueries of heggars, the gallantries of rascally valets, the runs of luck, good and bad, of sharpers and demireps, these were the ingredients, worked up into such a delightful *olla podrida* of all that is most spicy in Spanish roguedom, which made up the brilliant success of Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, which astonished the world in 1715; the same ingredients, with an admixture of buccaneer adventures, historical or travel tracts, and news letters, formed the materials of Defoe's strangely matter-of-fact romances.

The variety of prose fiction thus produced, during the seventeenth century, will be seen to be very great, and the futility of tracing the origin of the modern novel to any one source or fountain or period will be manifest. For a hundred years subsequent to the appearance of *Euphuus* and *Arcadia*, England lagged far behind France and Spain in prose fiction; upon the appearance of Defoe, England began to do something to redress the balance; it was not, however, until the 'forties of the eighteenth century that the English began to show what they could really do in the direction of the novel of contemporary life.

All nations, says M. Jusserand, have had novels, several have had admirable ones earlier in point of date than those of England; it is none the less true that the English have contributed more than any other people to the formation of the contemporary novel. From the time of Richardson and Fielding, when they first began to apply to this style of literature the qualities they have exhibited in other styles, combining the gift of *observation* peculiar to their dramatists with the *analytic subtlety* of their philosophers, and the *passionate ethical sincerity* of their apostles, the English have become the great masters of the novelist's art. "Voltaire, thinking of Locke, regretted that the philosophers of England were not the preceptors of the human race. If they have finished by becoming it, it is, above all, to the novelists of England that the result is due."

improved style, the urbanity, and the gossip humour of the letters and essays of the age of Anne. In *The Tatler* and *Spectator* are already found the methods and subjects of the modern novel. The De Coverley papers in *The Spectator*, in fact, want nothing but a love thread to convert them into a serial novel of a high order. The time seemed ripe for a sentimental novel, which one might have predicted would have assumed something of *The Vicar of Wakefield* type. It is somewhat unexpected, therefore, that just at this point in the novel's development we encounter a strong reversion to the picaresque type of novel in the first really great work of fiction, in its modern sense, of which our literature can boast—*The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner* (1719). Given a man and a desolate island to produce an enthralling romance—such was the problem which Defoe was to resolve, and, in resolving, to launch a new kind of craft in fiction altogether. The old romance was so devised as almost to preclude the reader from imagining himself in the position of the hero. The picaresque was little better in this respect, for it dealt almost exclusively with hunger-bitten beggars and criminal knaves. But here, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe was working out a problem which every Englishman could feel that he might under certain circumstances have to face, and in the resolution of which he could feel the keenest personal interest. Defoe thus made a great stride by rendering the novel a story of ordinary human concern and everyday experience—not either a narrative of kings and heroes or of the scum of human society. The period of sixty odd years between *La Princesse de Clèves* in 1678 and *Pamela* was that of what we may call the genesis of the modern novel by a series of permutations and combinations, and in this process it is a matter of some satisfaction that *Robinson Crusoe* has a prominent share.

During the interval between Sir Roger de Coverley and *Pamela* two trains of influence were at work which favoured the evolution of a strong, durable, and popular prose fiction. The first of these may be termed domestic, the second foreign. Under the first head we

include the development of the individual, and simultaneously that of a large well-to-do urban middle-class. The leisure which this class rapidly created for itself led to the formation of a large and self-conscious town society, curious, hungry for pleasure and new sensations, anxious to be told about themselves. The disrepute into which the drama had fallen since Collier's attack directed this society by an almost inevitable course into the flowery paths of fiction. The novel, it is true, had a reputation which was for the time being almost as unsavoury as that of the drama, but the novel was not a confirmed ill-doer, and it only needed a touch of genius to create for it a vast congregation of enthusiastic votaries. The foreign influence was the sensation caused over Europe between 1678 and 1731 by the refined sentimentalism of Madame de la Fayette; the importation of satire into the romance of adventure by Le Sage; the new psychological or analytic sentimentality of Marivaux; and the passionate eroticism of Prevost d'Exiles. These four writers carried the novel finally out of its cradle of chronicle and decided the victory of love over every other element in the composition of the novel of the future.

By a singular freak of fortune the *éclat* of this triumph for prose fiction was reaped not by a French writer at all, but by a demure little English tradesman who resembled a guinea-pig, and whose interests, until he was well over forty-five, had never strayed beyond his counter. Through him it came about that, after an interval of nearly thirty years since the position of the literary bodies seem to portend its nativity, the English novel as we now know it, in which love is the predominant interest, came to a birth with *Pamela* in 1740. Samuel Richardson's contribution to the development of the novel was, indeed, almost what Harvey's discovery of the heart's action was to the study of medicine. There had, it is true, been "Richardsonians before Richardson"; it was, nevertheless, *Clarissa*, more than any other single work, which carried the novel from the book-closet of the entresol to the library on the first floor.¹

¹ Of these early novels of sentiment the most notable are *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) of Madame de la Fayette and the *Mémoires du Comte de Comminges* of the Marquise de Tencin, the mother of D'Alembert. Better known now, and a more immediate predecessor of Richardson, was Marivaux, whose unfinished novel, *Marianne*, was published between 1731 and 1741. His only less famous *Paysan Parvenu* dates from 1735-6. The sentiment and even the main idea of *Marianne* were similar to that of Richardson's *Pamela*—a proof

Love in vacuo has been well described as the beginning and end of the pastoral romance proper. It was a necessity that the shepherds and shepherdesses who make up its characters should not be professionals, but should follow sheep for love—that they may live *plus doucement et sans contrainte*. Our best example of this pastoral kind of romance in English is Sidney's *Arcadia*, "that gallant legendry," as Gabriel Harvey calls it, the staple of which is made up of amorous courting and paronomasia or intricate and extravagant play upon words. This last quality passed away with the decline of the drama in England, but the long-drawn-out love dalliance was destined for a longer life. Sidney's influence in this kind reached down to the second birth of the novel in England. Pamela, a name shortened in pronunciation to Pamēla, came to life again—no longer a princess, but a servant-girl; she was introduced to the public by no knight, but by a fat and prosy Fleet Street bookseller, whose passion was not poetry but morality, and she has lived on to this day.¹

In Samuel Richardson himself it is impossible to take much interest. One of the numerous children of a respectable joiner, he was born in 1689, was pious and assiduous in all his duties, the industrious apprentice first of Fleet Street and then of Salisbury Court, where he carried on business as a master-printer down to his death at Parson's Green on July 4th, 1761.² From 1739 he had a country house at North End, Hammersmith, near the turnpike, where he endured with a perfect complacency the flatteries of a circle of female adorers, and where he wrote his novels—the novels of this demure little printer of Salisbury Court, which thrilled all Europe.

The character of Richardson deserves all the praise it has received from his biographer, Mrs. Barbauld. His integrity and industry were unfailing, and in material affairs he was generous; but his extreme vanity made him repellent to all but professed devotees, and the pusillanimity with which Johnson charged him, "the perpetual study to ward off petty inconveniences and to procure petty pleasures," is to be seen in his works in that attention to the infinitely little which is their weakness and their strength. He was formal, passionless, and unsympathetic. When he was young his seniors confided in him, but in his later years his stiffness alienated his juniors; "my daughters," he said, "are shy little fools." The famous council that criticised and applauded the drafts of his later novels consisted entirely of women, and included Miss Mulso, afterwards Mrs. Chapone, and the sisters of Henry Fielding. Johnson, though friendly to Richardson, tells us that he died for want of a change of flatterers.

In 1739 two booksellers (*i.e.* publishers), Rivington and Osborne, urged Richardson to compile a small volume of letters on the concerns of common life for the use of people unfamiliar with epistolary forms—such a book, they said, being greatly in demand. One of the first of these exemplary letters which it occurred to Richardson to write was one from a modest young lady's maid to her virtuous parents, explaining the dangers to which she was exposed (in an otherwise excellent situation) by the advances of the youthful master of the house. The subject expanded under Richardson's manipulation; he had, as a youth, written love-letters for young lady friends, and he had a predilection for patiently developing a sentimental situation, and a feminine instinct

of how similar conditions produce like effects, for it is highly improbable that Richardson knew anything of Marivaux. So inferior, however, was *Marianne* in directness of appeal, in concentration, and in intensity, that whereas Richardson founded a school, *Marianne* found no imitators and few enthusiasts. In the same year with the first part of *Marianne* appeared the seventh volume of the *Mémoires et Aventures d'un Homme de Qualité* containing the *Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*, one of the most exquisite literary gems, whether as a story of intense love or as a modern work of art, which the eighteenth century was to produce. Before Fielding, the first and last resource of the novelist was the coquette. Of all these coquettes one only still charms us irresistibly—the frail but passionate *Manon Lescaut*. M. Jusserand gives to us the palm in the building up of the novel. Let us return the compliment by expressing the conviction that the prologue of *Manon Lescaut* is the real threshold of the modern novel.

¹ Richardson is thus the direct inheritor of the analytic and sentimental method of romance which Sidney had developed before him. Of Sidney's disciples in England the best known is Thomas Lodge, whose *Rosalind* is more expressly described as a legacy of *Euphues*, to the style of which it is true that it aspires, but it is thoroughly Arcadian in its subject-matter. Other imitators of Sidney, either directly or indirectly through his French admirers, were Lady Mary Wroth, whose *Urania* appeared in 1621, and Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery, whose *Parthenissa* first saw the light in 1654, and later and very feebly by John Crowne, the dramatist, in his *Pandion and Amphigenia* of 1665.

² He was buried in St. Bride's Church.

for telling his hearers "all about it." As he progressed he began to think, he tells us, that the story, if written in an "easy and natural manner, suitable to the simplicity of it, might possibly introduce a new species of writing." In two months the two volumes of the original *Pamela* were finished. The book was published at the close of 1740, and it very soon bore out the author's prediction as to its being the forerunner of a new species of writing.

By blending with a curious art an air of minute reality worthy of Defoe, with a love intrigue of interminable length, Richardson had evolved the new species of sentimental romance which immediately won for itself, between the picaresque and the old heroic romance, a place superior to either.

Instead of the rogue we now have the designing villain; instead of the incidents of combat, there is analysis of character. Richardson was the first to trust entirely for his effects to the affections of home and to the accessories of ordinary life. He first showed how the imagination could be captured without the extraneous aid of marvellous events or racy narrative. By his manipulation of the theme of Love he could renew the situations without tiring his readers. His themes exactly suited the rapidly increasing middle-class of readers, who were eager to hear about themselves.

The epistolary form which Richardson adopted (in preference to the direct narrative or the autobiography) lent itself to the slow, minute development of a few characters, for which he had such an extraordinary faculty. Many subtle touches are added by the constant "repercussion" of theme. Each writer is narrating not events alone, but his or her reflections on previous narrations of the same events. As when an important event occurs to-day one has first the home comments, then the foreign comments, then the home comments upon the foreign comments, and so on, until a new event distracts attention; so in Richardson, upon the most trifling occurrence is superimposed, first a lengthy letter describing it, then a letter of assent or approval of the manner in which it is described, and then a letter appreciating the approval, with additional reasons why it is just. The method is almost fatal to a story; but

then, as Johnson remarked, no one ever read Richardson for that. Few things in real life are more revealing, as far as character is concerned, than letters, and when new deposits of them are discovered, as in the case of Madame de Maintenon, Hume, Cromwell, and Napoleon, they generally compel us to reconstruct, or at least to modify, our conceptions. In the hands, therefore, of a master of this species of writing like Richardson it was natural that, far from hampering, they should even aid the process of minute delineation.

A poor sequel to *Pamela* was published by Richardson in 1741. Soon afterwards he began his masterpiece, *Clarissa*, working at it deliberately until eight volumes were completed, and all published by the end of 1748. *Pamela* is said to have absorbed Diderot to such an extent that in answer to questions upon personal matters he was wont to reply abstractedly, "O! mes amis, Pamela!" But the European reputation of *Pamela* was far eclipsed by that of *Clarissa*. Richardson was classed with Shakespeare and Homer; and Stendhal, many years later, spoke of his work as an *Iliad*. Klopstock's enthusiasm was so great that he sought a position in London so as to be near the author. The English novel, as represented by *Clarissa*, gave in France, in Germany, in the North, and even in Italy the impression of a new species of literature like no other—"emancipated in its magnificent flight from antique models, perfectly free from traditional influence." All the novelists imitated, or at least were influenced by, Richardson, from Rousseau and Marmontel right down to the suicide of Werther. In *Paul et Virginie* we observe a distinct combination of the influence of two very diverse masterpieces of English fiction, *Robinson Crusoe* and *Clarissa*. Even more surprising, perhaps, than the incoherent rapture of Diderot and his friends, and the ejaculations of "Richardson! O Richardson!" is the admission of the contemptuous Lady Mary Wortley that she had sobbed scandalously over *Clarissa*, or the dictum of Chesterfield that the little printer, though he lacked style, understood the heart.

Clarissa Harlowe is one of the marvels of literature¹—first, by reason of its universal

¹ *Clarissa Harlowe* is a History (Richardson would have never called it a novel or a romance) in ten volumes, with thirty-two principal personages, and the narrative is conducted by letter.

Clarissa begins by writing to her friend Miss Howe to tell her how it all began. The elegant and brilliant Lovelace was introduced into the family of Harlowe as an aspirant to the hand of *Clarissa's* elder

success among the best intellects of the day, and secondly, on account of the neglect into which it has fallen since. The apparent inconsistency will perhaps be settled by Richardson, like Dr. Johnson, retaining a great reputation without being much read. Yet a book which, like *Clarissa*, achieves the most difficult task in literature—that of painting a true woman—should not be difficult to read, nor does it, as a matter of fact, tax the patience of the reader to an extent that is unfamiliar to the reader of Scott, of Balzac, or, indeed, many other of the greatest romancists. The reader finds in Richardson no ingenious plot, no brilliant *dénouement*; but he is, nevertheless, confronted by genuine human passion, and if he be studying the novel chronologically, he is enabled for the first time to realise its potentiality as an instrument of analysis—the analysis of the human heart. The reader of *Clarissa* is as one who should find in a forgotten drawer which he is ransacking a packet of old letters, yellow with age. “With a careless glance you skim a page, then two pages, then three. Then, in spite of yourself, your curiosity is piqued. The letters refer to an old, a very old, love-story, the actors in which are unknown; the names convey

nothing to you, the action passes in a far-off land. You see what a mastery this history obtains over you. Like a perfume half evaporated, a vibrating human interest emanates still from these fading leaves; the names begin to take colour, the shadows become animated, these old memories live and move before one’s eyes. The hours glide by, and still one reads with a gentle emotion lulled by the rhythm of this life, so long a thing of the past. On a sudden the story becomes intensely pathetic, the anguish is poignant, a cry of despair goes up from the depths of the past. ‘How this tale is affecting me!’ one exclaims half involuntarily, with eyes not perhaps of the driest.” Such is the experience of a Frenchman who reads *Clarissa Harlowe* to-day. If, he concludes, realism is the art of giving persons the impression of life, then Richardson is one of the greatest of all realists.

The English novel gained enormously by the shock of opposition between the diverse ideals of Richardson and his rival Henry Fielding. Because Richardson was perpetually mouthing “morality,” while Fielding took for his heroes avowed scamps and introduced the language of country squires in all its natural grossness, it

sister, Arabella. Not really caring for Arabella, he falls a victim to the attractions of *Clarissa*. The brother, James, opposes the match, ostensibly because he distrusts and despises Lovelace, really because he detests *Clarissa*, who had come in for a snug legacy from the grandfather while he was left out in the cold. The slighted Arabella naturally gives him what aid she can in calumniating Lovelace to the Harlowe family. James accordingly provokes Lovelace to a duel, and is wounded. Mistress Harlowe, terrified for the safety of her favourite son, persuades *Clarissa* to correspond with Lovelace and propitiate him as far as possible. She receives passionate but respectful letters from this fascinating rip, and soon begins to think of him to the exclusion of all other subjects. The Harlowes, getting alarmed, plan a marriage between *Clarissa* and Mr. Solmes, a rich brute, altogether unacceptable to the young lady. Family pressure of the severest kind is brought to bear upon her. She is only allowed out of her room to interview the unworthy Solmes. Yet she goes on writing to Lovelace, who drops vague menaces, which have the desired effect upon Madam Harlowe.

The letters multiply, they cross, repeat themselves, are copied, accumulate in great stacks. *Clarissa*, confined as she is to her room, corresponds with her sister, her brother, her uncle; receives, transcribes, and comments upon their responses, which she forwards to Miss Howe. Then we have Miss Howe’s comment upon it all. *Clarissa* writes never, never, to Mr. Solmes, who replies “Wait and see.” All this time Lovelace is in hiding in a hut or small tavern upon the estate; he has bribed a footman who tells him all that is going on. The relatives arrange that *Clarissa* shall be married in fifteen days. *Clarissa*’s Aunt Hervey goes down on her knees to her; *Clarissa* goes down too, and they discuss the matter in that posture. But nothing is decided. Finally *Clarissa* is threatened with an unscrupulous uncle in the country who will force the marriage on. At this crisis the wicked Lovelace, by a skilful ruse, carries her off in a postchaise. The details are explained in letter after letter. Lovelace entrusts her safe-guarding to a very wicked woman in his pay, called Sinclair. Thence she finally escapes to Flask Walk, Hampstead. Her virtues finally attract universal sympathy; but her health is undermined—she is dying. Bedford, former companion of Lovelace’s orgies, watches over her as if she were a sister. The lodging-house people treat her as if she were their daughter. She takes advantage of it to recount the whole story of her sufferings to them. Even in her failing health and growing infirmity she finds strength to talk like a book, to edify the whole world, to solemnly pardon Lovelace, and to write, in addition to her last will and testament, three or four letters of ten pages each per day. Nay, on her death-bed she hands over twelve epistles to Bedford, who promises to distribute them in the proper quarters. Even Death cannot put a stopper on her correspondence. *Clarissa*’s cousin, Colonel Morden, provokes Lovelace to a duel, kills him, and then takes up the pen of *Clarissa* herself to compile an epistle in five chapters describing the obsequies of the heroine.

was commonly assumed at the time that the tendency of Richardson was Sunday and edifying, while that of Fielding was decidedly shady. We should hardly take this view now. The copy-book morality of Richardson, with its perpetual insistence upon the value (especially the cash value) of chastity and the morbid analysis to which this theme is subjected—this it is at the present day which is in danger of being regarded as prurient; nor can the charge be fairly denied, at least as regards *Pamela*. The virtue of Fielding, with its broad tolerance for “slips” and wild oats, is seen to be fundamentally a much nobler and more generous creed, not concentrated upon one or two departments of human conduct, but distributed with philosophic breadth and insight over the whole. Fielding, indeed, is the antithesis of Richardson, and represents the opposite pole of English character. He is the Cavalier, Richardson the Roundhead; he is the gentleman, Richardson the tradesman; he represents church and county, Richardson chapel and borough. Richardson had much of the patient insight and intensity of genius, but he lacked the humour and literary accomplishment which Fielding possessed in such large measure. Fielding, indeed, combined breadth and keenness, classical culture, and a delicate Gallic irony to an extent rare among English writers. He lacks the noble and delicate intuition of Richardson in the analysis of women, nor could he compass the broad farcical humour of Smollett or the sombre colouring by which Smollett sometimes produces such wonderful effects of contrast. There was no *poetry* in Fielding, but there was practically every other ingredient of a great prose writer—taste, culture, order, vivacity, humour, and irony delicately blended, and, above all, a penetrating common-sense. Of the race of Cervantes and Molière, he is unquestionably the great man of letters of the 'forties and 'fifties. And if Fielding the man is a corrective to Richardson, what shall we say for Fielding's masterpiece *Tom Jones*—the pivotal novel in the history of English fiction? In the direct method in which the story is told, in the gradual concentration of plot, and acceleration of the action, in the chorus of comment and criticism of life kept up by the author in supplement to the narrative, in the affectation of an epical tone, and in the general balance and arrangement of characters, and their final disposal before the

ringing down of the curtain, *Tom Jones* supplied a working model to the novelists of the next century. It summed up and transferred from the stage to the novel a number of dramatic qualities and tricks which Fielding had painfully acquired during his apprenticeship. It perpetuated, we must add, the vicious habit of interpolating long narratives quite independent of the main story—a precedent the force of which is seen very clearly in the recognition paid to its authority by Dickens. But the influence of *Tom Jones* is so ubiquitous and so universal that to attempt to trace it would be to commit oneself to a monograph upon the novel in England. Enough to say that upon the character contrast between Tom, an idle, thoughtless, rattling rascal, with no deeply ingrained vice, however, and nobody's enemy but his own, and Master Blifil, “a prudent, discreet, sober young gentleman, strongly attached to the interest only of one single person,” Fielding constructed a novel of character, love, adventure, and dramatic incident, which combined the best features of all the *genres* which prose fiction had yet evolved, with a good many excellent new features of its own, in such a way as to establish a standard model in fiction and to point the way to the conquest of an enormous new territory. The result was almost immediately seen. During the seventeenth century, and down to the time of George II., England had been content to import and translate fiction upon a great scale. The tide of importation now rapidly began to ebb, until in 1755 we have Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Italy receiving boxes full of novels from her daughter in England. This was prophetic of the great export trade that England was to have in the reintegrated novel. Almost simultaneously England began to produce her own painters and her own masters of prose fiction.

Fielding, whose grandfather was a cadet of a noble family, and who was himself a cousin to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, was born in Somerset on April 22nd, 1707. His father Edmund, a lieutenant under Marlborough, made a runaway match with a daughter of Sir Henry Gould of Sharpham Park. His mother died when he was eleven. He was schooled at Motcombe, near Sharpham Park, by a tutor whom Fielding afterwards caricatured as Trulliber, subsequently at Eton, and he also went for a short while to study at Leyden, taking a

degree in the faculty of Letters, and returning to London in 1728.

He had little to depend on but his wits, for his father had married again and he could no longer count upon an allowance. He was at this time a tall, handsome young man, well-knit, and exceptionally robust, with a keen appetite for pleasure and a loathing for work. Being “proffered the choice to turn hackney-coachman or hackney-writer,” he chose the latter alternative. He turned to the theatre for aid, and began a long dramatic career with *Love in Several Masques*, played at Drury Lane in February, 1728. In the next few years he produced comedies and farces (some given to the world anonymously) with great rapidity.¹ His plays are journeyman’s work, a sort of rough carpentry, for which his mocking humour and youthful affectation of cynicism served him well. The model he kept in view was the artificial comedy of Congreve, but it was a Congreve depressed by duller audiences than those of Queen Anne’s day. He wrote with extravagant haste, and as we read we can still hear him damning the man who invented fifth acts.

Nevertheless, his apprenticeship as a playwright was of value to the novelist, and Fielding, though young and inexperienced, was a brilliant apprentice. His plays obtained no great dramatic success. The two best, from a stage point of view, are probably *The Mock Doctor* and *The Miser*, after Molière; but, like Thackeray’s early work before he achieved real greatness with *Vanity Fair*, they are of considerable interest as easel-pieces to the literary student; they are, moreover, bright and readable throughout. It is credibly reported of his capital burlesque, *Tom Thumb the Great*, that it evoked a laugh from Swift, who only laughed twice in his life. In 1735 Fielding, having married, aspired to managerial honours; he bought the little French theatre in the Haymarket and brought out *Pasquin* (a burlesque patterned on *The Rehearsal*), an amusing dramatic squib, which had an enormous run, and was followed by another dramatic satire, called *The Historical Register*. The success unhappily involved exasperating “Old Bob” (Sir Robert Walpole); and the Licensing Act of June, 1737, put a term to Fielding’s dramatic labours.²

A somewhat obscure interval in Fielding’s life follows (during which he was probably living in chambers and trying to practise at the Bar, contributing occasional essays to *The Champion* the while), and lasts down to February, 1742, which saw the appearance of *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and of his friend Mr. Abraham Adams*. The hero of this remarkable parody was the brother of Richardson’s Pamela, whose experiences had been made known to the world in 1740. Joseph, like his sister, was tempted by a person far above him in station—in this case, a dissolute woman of fashion—and some amusing passages in the first few chapters burlesque the manoeuvres of the maid in her far from artless resistance to the base designs of the squire “Mr. B.,” whose real name Fielding discovered was Mr. Booby. The caution of the heroine, and the revulsion by which Pamela, from the stern assertor of chastity, becomes the grateful adorer of the rake the moment he speaks of the chaplain, constitute genuinely assailable points in Richardson’s work, published though it was “to cultivate the principles of virtue and religion.” Richardson not unnaturally ascribed the motive of the burlesque to a low feeling of jealousy, but jealousy was not one of Fielding’s failings. Fielding was, no doubt, prompted by much the same feeling that spurred Thackeray to burlesque Lytton—a feeling of reaction against the morbid tendencies of Richardson’s work.

He was well read in French, and there is good reason to suppose that he may have been acquainted with the *Paysan Parvenu*, the autobiography of a footman who repels the advances of his master’s wife, and eventually marries a wealthy *dévote*. If so, the circumstance forms another link between Marivaux and the genesis of the modern English novel.

Fielding’s genius for the development of character, having once found scope, was not to be confined within the bounds of a mere travesty. The story soon follows a free course of development, the writer’s art being lavished with a free hand upon the character of Parson Adams—a noble example of primitive goodness and childlike Christian altruism. Adams (whose original was a certain eccentric William Young) is in many respects Fielding’s finest and most

¹ One of these was printed “As it was damned at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane.”

² The immediate cause of offence was a scurrilous farce called *The Golden Rump*, in which H. F.’s collaboration is somewhat problematical.

original conception, and the character seems to represent in some measure Fielding's own free but generous philosophy.

In the year after the appearance of *Joseph Andrews* the three volumes of Fielding's miscellanies were published. The first volume contained his quaint satirical essays (at a distance after Swift these, as his comedies after Congreve), *On Conversation* and *On Nothing*; the second has his *Journey from this World to the Next*, a *jeu d'esprit* after Lucian or Cyrano de Bergerac, in which is apparent that acuteness as a literary critic that he afterwards displayed so conspicuously in the interchapters of *Tom Jones*, but which, like much of Fielding's prose when he is not depicting character, shows signs of haste and languor; the third volume is occupied by his strange *History of the Life of the late Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great*, a subtle, prolonged satire upon spurious greatness of all kinds, and a model of sustained and sleepless irony. It is singular that three such great masters of prose fiction as Fielding, Smollett, and Thackeray should have each attempted a performance of this kind. *Wild* is rather too long, but portions of it (especially the opening and closing chapters) far surpass anything in *Ferdinand Count Fathom* or *Barry Lyndon*, and place Fielding definitely second to Swift in ironic power among English prose writers.

For some years previous to 1748 Fielding must have been living in considerable distress both in regard to body and estate. His robust frame and magnificent constitution had been impaired by a life of careless pleasure; he had rapidly run through his wife's money, and must occasionally have experienced the hospitalities of sponging-houses. To add to his distresses, his beautiful and adored first wife had died in 1743, and it was not until November, 1747, that he found consolation by marrying his first wife's maid, Mary Daniel. She justified his choice by proving a devoted wife and an excellent mother to his children.¹

In December, 1748, through the kindness of an old schoolfellow (see preface to *Tom Jones*), Fielding was appointed Justice of the Peace for Westminster, and settled in Bow Street. The post was a very important one, involving the police administration of practically the whole of the rapidly increasing West End; but it was underpaid ("some of the dirtiest money on earth") and ill-esteemed. From 1742 until

after his appointment Fielding made no sign to the world of letters. His health was bad, and the bailiffs were probably worse; but his inherited buoyancy was enormous, and he had during all this period been progressing slowly with his great novel, *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, which appeared on February 28th, 1749.

Fielding, who had made something under £200 by *Joseph Andrews*, made at least £700 by his new venture, which was popular from the first, and was promptly translated and dramatised; and since its appearance all the very best judges have sounded its praise. Hazlitt and Coleridge agree that the plot is "almost unrivalled." At the same time the feeling of the general principles of human nature operating in particular circumstances is always intense, and incident and situation are used only to bring out character. The epical quality of *Tom Jones* is touched on by Byron when he calls its author "our prose Homer," its satirical energy by Hazlitt when he compares Fielding with Hogarth, and its monumental character by Gibbon when he speaks of it outliving the Escorial. Thackeray's tribute to his great predecessor (in the preface to *Pendennis*) as the depicter of "a man" studied from no draped model is well known; but the greatest compliment it ever received, perhaps, was from the clever, sardonic Lady Mary Montagu, who inscribed in her copy the words *Ne plus ultra*.

Fielding's training had been too literary and too critical for him to confine his energies, even in a novel, entirely to the requirements of fictitious narrative, admirably though these lent themselves to his special gifts as a master of irony and the comic spirit. Thus at the beginning of each book he interpolates one of those delightful prolegomenous essays in which, ever and anon, as George Eliot says, he seems to bring his armchair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. It may be doubted whether the book has one single character equivalent in merit to that of Parson Adams; but in Squire Western, Partridge the barber, the philosopher Square, his rival Thwackum, Miss Bridget Allworthy, Mrs. Honour the lady's-maid, and most fascinating of heroines Miss Sophie Western, he has created a group of living characters who will live and be born again in a bewildering variety

¹ She survived him until 1802, with four children.

of forms as long as prose fiction subsists among us.

Amelia followed *Tom Jones* on December 19th, 1751, upon which day the first edition was exhausted. It was dedicated to Ralph Allen, the Squire Allworthy of the previous novel. If the plot is inferior to that of *Tom Jones*, the descriptions and characters, and especially the pathetic delineation of his first wife in the heroine, are second to none in prose fiction. Fielding's only regular literary performance after *Amelia* was a bi-weekly critical paper called *The Covent Garden Journal*, which he brought to an end in November, 1752. He had long suffered from suppressed gout, and in 1754 he retired to a little house at Fordhook, in the parish of Ealing, a place which he held to have the best air in the kingdom, far superior to that of Kensington gravel-pits (which was, it will be remembered, one of the health-resorts of Swift). But he dreaded another winter even in the climate of Ealing, and decided on a voyage to Lisbon on a forlorn hope of recovery. His hopefulness was up to the last as inveterate as his improvidence. At Lisbon he died on October 8th, 1754. Let travellers to Lisbon, says Borrow, in the opening chapter of his delightful *Bible*

in *Spain*, repair "to the English church and cemetery, Père la Chaise in miniature, where, if they be of England, they may well be excused if they kiss the cold tomb, as I did, of the author of *Amelia*, the most singular genius which their island ever produced." The sweet and long-suffering character of *Amelia* (a portrait in some measure of his still-cherished Charlotte) is, indeed, one which the creator of *Hermione* and *Virgilia* might be proud of having delineated. The year after his death appeared Fielding's *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon*, a charming piece of literature.

That *Tom Jones* has not retained its place more securely in the hearts of the reading multitude is attributable mainly to the fact that so large a portion of its fire has been stolen by the creators of subsequent masterpieces, such as *Vanity Fair*, *Pendennis*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Charles O'Malley*, who have succeeded in combining some of Fielding's distinctive excellences with not a few of their own; it has been the same with all the novels of Fielding's age. The old wine has been strained and re-bottled with such masterly skill that the old receptacles are in danger of being forgotten. Fielding and Smollett are no longer hidden under the sofa cushions; they are neglected, on the top shelf.¹

¹ The standard *History of Prose Fiction* is still that of J. C. Dunlop (revised edition, Bohn, 1896). See also Jusserand's *English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare* (1890), F. M. Warren's *History of the Novel previous to the Seventeenth Century* (1895), W. Raleigh's *The English Novel* (1894), W. L. Cross's *Development of the English Novel* (1899), Bliss Perry's *Study of Prose Fiction* (1903), the studies by Salvete and Rohde on the novel of antiquity (1894 and 1900), F. W. Chandler's *Picaresque Novel in Spain* (1901), Morillot on the *Roman en France de 1610* (1893), and the excellent monographs of André Le Breton on the *Roman* of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries respectively (1890-1901). Richardson's *Works* have been edited by Mangin (1811), Scott (the Novelist's Library), Leslie Stephen (1883), and Ethel McKenna (20 vols., 1902). In addition to the famous *Éloge* by Diderot, there are *Memoirs* by A. Dobson (1900) and Clara L. Thomson (1900), and studies by Jeffrey, Stephen, Traill, Birrell, Texte, Oliphant, Le Breton, Larroumet, Schmidt, and Donner. There are good modern editions of Fielding by Stephen (1882), Saintsbury (1893), Maynardier (1903), and Henley (1903), and there are *Memoirs* of the novelist by Arthur Murphy (1762), Scott (1821), T. Roscoe (1840), Thackeray (1853), Frederick Lawrence* (1855), Austin Dobson (1883 and 1900), and Leslie Stephen (*Dict. Nat. Biog. and Hours in a Library*). See also *Selected Essays of Henry Fielding*, ed. G. H. Gerould (1905), Andrew Lang's *Letters on Literature* (1893), and Henley's *Views and Reviews* (1895). There are handy editions of Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne in Hutchinson's *Classic Novels*. The best complete editions of Smollett are Roscoe's (1841), J. P. Browne's (8 vols., 1872), Saintsbury's (12 vols., 1895), and Constable's (introduction by Henley) (12 vols., 1899-1901). Of Sterne there are editions by Browne, Saintsbury, in the Standard Library, Temple and World's Classics; and innumerable separate editions of *Tristram* and the *Sentimental Journey*. Thackeray is seen at his very worst in moralising upon Sterne. Traill, "Q.," Elwin, Stephen, Herbert Paul, and Charles Whibley have done their best to redress this wrong. Excellent French contributions are by Montégut, Edmond Scherer, Texte, and Paul Stapfer.

CHAPTER II

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

"If every copy of *Tristram Shandy* were destroyed to-morrow, its influence upon style and thought would remain."—HERBERT PAUL, *Men and Letters*.

Smollett—Sterne—Minor novelists.

TOBIAS SMOLLETT completes the trio of our proto-novelists. As a novelist pure and simple he is less than Richardson or Fielding, but he is quite remarkable as one of the earliest eminent men of letters of all work. Poet, playwright, historian, publicist, topographer, translator, satirist, periodical critic, lampooner, and novelist, he wrote skilfully and fluently on almost every conceivable subject, and for a short period during the interregnum between Pope and Johnson, he was a kind of literary Protector. Tobias George Smollett, to give him his full name, was born at Dalquhurn, near Bonhill, Dumbartonshire, in 1721. He was a cadet of an old Scots family, and had a fairly good education at Dumbarton and Glasgow; but he was thwarted in his desire to enter the army, and was apprenticed to a doctor of medicine. After three years of simmering discontent, he determined, in 1739, to seek his fortune in London. His journey southwards with his tragedy, *The Regicide*, in his pocket, is described with infinite spirit in the earlier chapters of *Roderick Random*, which are quite among the best he ever wrote. How far these are autobiographic has been disputed, but each of four separate claimants to the honour of being the original Strap vowed that he had shared with Smollett the vicissitudes ascribed in the novel to Random and his comrade. He lost no time in submitting his play to Lord Lyttelton, the patron of his countryman, James Thomson. Months elapsed before Lyttelton, with vague politeness, deprecated the honour of sponsorship for the play, which was, indeed, exceptionally bad. Smollett retorted at once in his cross-grained way by discarding his patron. Seven years

later he savagely parodied Lyttelton's *Monody* upon the death of his wife. Despairing of success as a poet, he got a post as surgeon on a King's ship, and was present off Cuba during the operations of Admiral Vernon. We next find him a surgeon in Downing Street, and in 1746 he wrote a lament upon the rigorous suppression of the Jacobite rebellion entitled *The Tears of Scotland*. He had in a remarkable degree the *perfervidum ingenium scotorum*, but he had none of the diplomatic talent that has made eminent physicians of so many of his countrymen. He would probably have become another Ralph—a competent hack-writer and party pamphleteer—had not the success of *Pamela* and of *Joseph Andrews* (1740-41) impelled him to try his hand at prose fiction. Analytical methods had no attraction for him, and he was not strong at constructing a plot. He fell back, therefore, upon the picaresque romance as developed in *Gil Blas*. He admits that he used the immortal novel of Le Sage as a model, but he devoted much more attention than his master to the development of eccentric character, and in his fondness for rich grotesque colouring he shows the influence of Ben Jonson and Shadwell, and also of the well-known class of "character"-writers of the seventeenth century. His indebtedness to Fielding is more immediate and more obvious. The two small volumes of *Roderick Random* were published in 1748. The author's name was not on the title, and the book was by some attributed to Fielding, but Smollett made no further attempt to conceal the authorship, and he at once became famous. He went over to Paris in quest of new material for caricature, and in 1751, in four duodecimo volumes, appeared

Peregrine Pickle. Like its predecessor, it is a loosely constructed series of adventures, in which even greater scope is afforded to Smollett's remarkable power of eccentric characterisation. The chief centres of attraction are the grotesque misanthrope of Bath, Cadwallader Crabtree, the burlesque scenes afforded by the physician (a caricature of Akenside) and the painter in Paris, and the so-called "garrison" with its inhabitants, Hatchway and Pipes, and the inimitable Trunnion, the prototype of so many humorous figures, from Uncle Toby to Captain Cuttle.¹

Smollett's third novel, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, appeared in 1753, by which time he was settled down at Chelsea, married, and a father. *Fathom* embodies the much-too-protracted history of a swindler; but, as Hazlitt says, there is more power of writing occasionally shown in it than in any of Smollett's works. Hazlitt instances the fine and bitter irony of the Count's address to the country of his ancestors on landing in England, the robber scene in the forest, and the sketch of the Parisian swindler who personates a raw English country squire ("Western is tame in comparison"). Few novels have been more imitated, for *Fathom* was the studio model of all the mystery and terror school of fiction, commencing with Mrs. Radcliffe. In spite of these successes, the novelist, owing mainly to a profuse hospitality, was never out of pecuniary straits. From 1756 he conducted *The Critical Review*, set up in opposition to *The Monthly Review* of Griffiths. During 1756-7 he issued the hastily

compiled volumes of his *History of England*; in 1757 was produced at Drury Lane his patriotic piece, *The Reprisal*, or *The Tars of Old England*. In 1755 he had published a translation of *Don Quixote*; and in 1760 he issued serially his imitation of that masterpiece entitled *Launcelot Greaves*, remarkable chiefly for the vivid opening chapter and the fact that it was the first novel to run through the parts of a magazine. In 1762, as a champion of Bute's unpopular Ministry, he undertook the editorship of *The Briton*, which elicited the scurrilous issue called *The North Briton*, run by John Wilkes, with the aid of Smollett's enemy, Charles Churchill. His health broke down under these and other gigantic tasks of compilation, translation, and abridgment, upon which was superadded grief at the death of his daughter Elizabeth, his "little Bet," at the age of fifteen. The greater part of the next two years, 1763-5, he spent in the south of France and in Italy, chiefly at Nice. In 1766 he published his *Travels through France and Italy*. Travelling seems to have put him in a specially bad humour, and he took a jaundiced view of much that he saw abroad. But no book of Smollett's shows an intellect more alert or a power of observation more acute than his travelling diary. A peevish humour (due in large measure to ill-health) frequently animates his notes; but they are put together with much literary skill, and there seems no doubt that, as regards accuracy in matters of detail, they attain a very high level. On returning to England, Smollett revisited

¹ Trunnion's ride to church reappears in *John Gilpin*; the misanthrope practising satire under cover of a feigned deafness reappears in the Sir Mungo Malagrowth of Scott, who, indeed, acknowledges further debts to Smollett in the preface to *The Legend of Montrose*. The "garrison" unquestionably suggested to Sterne the "castle" of *Tristram Shandy* and to Dickens the "fortress" of Mr. Wemmick. And indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the tide of subsequent fiction is strewn on every hand with the *disjecta membra* of Smollett's farcical inventions.

The elegy in imitation of Tibullus written in 1747, and printed in the 51st chapter of *Random*, is interesting in view of the elegiac movement commencing with Gray's *Elegy* of 1749-51:

Let happy lovers fly where pleasures call,
With festive songs beguile the fleeting hour;
Lead beauty through the mazes of the ball,
Or press her wanton in Love's roseate bower:
For me no more I'll range the empurpled mead,
Where shepherds pipe, and virgins dance around;
Nor wander thro' the woodbine's fragrant shade,
To hear the music of the grove resound.

I'll seek some lonely church, or dreary hall,
Where fancy paints the glimm'ring taper blue,
Where damps hang mould'ring on the ivied wall,
And sheeted ghosts drink up the midnight dew.
There leagued with hopeless anguish and despair,
Awhile in silence o'er my fate repine:
Then with a long farewell to love and care,
To kindred dust my weary limbs consign.

The author of this, the unfortunate Melopoyne, a poet of the Marshalsea, is forced by hunger to descend to prose, and to subsist on apparitions, monsters, rapes, and murders. The prototype of Borrow's Man in Black is also to be found in *Random*, which is full of hints afterwards utilised by Dickens, an early devourer of Smollett's fiction. For the quality of the *Travels*, see *Cornhill*, August, 1901, and Introduction to Constable's *Smollett*, vols. xi. and xii.

Scotland, and then proceeded to Bath, where, as a sequel to a reperusal of Anstey's *New Bath Guide*, he conceived the framework of his last great novel.

Smollett's first production upon his return to London in 1768 was his ferocious satire on the English political system, entitled *The History and Adventures of an Atom*, published early in 1769. The temper of this satire is borrowed mainly from *Gulliver*, with aid, as to local colour and nomenclature, from the Jesuit and other accounts of Japan which he had come across during the compilation of his voyages and travels. After its publication Smollett's health seriously relapsed, and in December, 1769 (a consulate on the Mediterranean having been refused him), he left England for good, and settled first at Pisa, and then near Antignano, a few miles out of Leghorn. There, during the autumn of 1770, he penned his immortal *Humphry Clinker*, a rare example of late maturity of literary power and fecundity of humour. The sardonic humour, persistent curiosity, and faculty of observation shown in the *Travels* are here combined with the mellow contentment of the voyager who has forgotten the small worries of transport, and with the enthusiasm of the veteran who revisits the scenes of his youth. The character-drawing, too, though still caustic, has been mellowed greatly in the lapse of twenty years. Humphry Clinker himself is exquisite, and his sweetheart, Winifred Jenkins (the progenitress of Mrs. Malaprop), not far behind him. Matthew Bramble, irritable but good-hearted (in whom Smollett adumbrates his own wintry temperament), is excellently supported, and seems to have been the prototype of Sir Anthony Absolute in *The Rivals*. But the pedant Lismahago is "the flower of the flock." His tenaciousness in argument is not so delightful as the relaxation of his logical severity when he finds his fortune mellowing in the wintry smiles of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble. This last is the best-preserved and most severe of all Smollett's characters.

Smollett died at Leghorn on September 17th, 1771, and was buried in the English cemetery of that place. Beneath his rugged exterior and his sardonic moodiness there was a fund of

generous and even romantic feeling. He was probably a better man than either Fielding or Richardson, but his career is less "sympathetic." In his youth there was too strong a vein of arrogance and pride, and as he grew old he got querulous through overwork.

Humphry Clinker, the "most pleasant gossiping novel that ever was written," is a delightful travelling companion, but it does not possess the vigour of *Roderick Random*, which contains some vignettes in prose of the highest literary quality. Thus the story of Miss Williams, the episode of Random's sojourn in the Marshalsea and his relations with Jackson and Melopoyne, or of his service in the royal regiment of Picardie, or of his travelling companionship with the Capucin friar, of whom he always kept to the windward—all these contain masterly strokes of delineation and hints for development in fictitious narrative which have been made the most of by Marryat, Surtees, Dickens, Borrow, and a host of other novelists. Of the coarse savagery, rude generosity, and brutal use of authority habitual in the British navy of his time Smollett gives a unique and perfectly invaluable picture.¹

The style of *Roderick Random* is more easy and flowing than that of *Tom Jones*, the humour broader and as effectual, the incident even more lively. What then gives the superiority to Fielding? The answer is thus given by Hazlitt: "It is the superior insight into the springs of human character and the constant development of that character through every change of circumstance. Smollett's humour often arises from the situation of the persons, or the peculiarity of their external appearance, as from Roderick Random's carroty locks which hung down over his shoulders like a pound of candles, or Strap's ignorance of London, and the blunders that arise from it. . . . He exhibits the ridiculous accidents and reverses to which human life is liable, not the stuff of which it is composed. We read *Roderick Random* as an entertaining story, for the particular accidents and modes of life which it describes have ceased to exist, but we regard *Tom Jones* as a real history, because the author never stops short of those essential principles which lie at

¹ The view that his sketches of Bowling, Trunnion, Morgan, Pipes, Crampley, Oakum, Hatchway, and Whiffle were mere caricatures is no longer tenable. See an interesting article on "Smollett and the Old Sea Dogs," *Blackwood*, August, 1898. See also Chambers's *Tobias Smollett* and the memoir (by Thomas Seccombe) in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* An edition of the *Travels* by the same writer is in preparation.

the bottom of all our actions, and in which we feel an immediate interest, *intus et in cute*." Smollett surpassed Fielding, first, as a powerful occasional master of pathos—as in the death of Commodore Trunnion, where, amid some exaggeration, there is a thoroughly genuine pathetic force—and, secondly, in his employment of natural description as a background, as in *Count Fathom*, where the picture of the storm coming on at night in the depths of the forest, and of the terror that constrains Fathom to leave the high road, reveals the latent imaginative power that was in the author. But between Smollett and Fielding there are perhaps really more points of resemblance than contrast. Both are vigorous painters of real life, and both increased the resources of their art. Their broad, effective touches are in strong contrast alike with Defoe's austere realism of incident and with Richardson's minute realism of character.

Laurence Sterne, born at Clonmel on November 24th, 1713, was the son of Roger Sterne, "a poor devil of a lieutenant in a marching regiment." His father was of Yorkshire, his mother of humble Irish origin. The father died on foreign service in 1731, but Laurence preserved a lively remembrance of a character which, as subsequently idealised by him (in Uncle Toby), lives with Falstaff and Mr. Micawber in the Elysium of fiction. In 1733 Sterne went as sizar to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he met, in 1735, that gay-spirited youth, some five years his junior, John Hall Stevenson. Stevenson may, in fact, be termed his college tutor, the lessons that he imparted giving a bent to all Sterne's subsequent life. Having been ordained and inducted (through the kind offices of his uncle Jaques, a prominent Whig cleric at York) into the living of Sutton, near York, he settled down there, "painting, fiddling, and shooting," and often running into York, where he held two prebends. A parson more concerned to make his profession pay him and amuse him, and less interested in its spiritual or evangelical side, it would be difficult to find even at the present day. On Easter Monday, 1741, he married Elizabeth ("Eliza the first"), the daughter of a Yorkshire parson named Lumley, and four years later was born his daughter and correspondent, Lydia. But Sterne's greatest resource, as middle life began to close in upon him, was the renewal of his intimacy with Hall Steven-

son, the Eugenius of *Tristram Shandy*. Hall had been ripened in the interval by foreign travel, by the society of Wilkes and other unholy friars of Medmenham, and by that of the French wits and satirists of the sixteenth century, of whose writings he had accumulated a choice and curious collection at Skelton Hall, nicknamed Crazy Castle. It was in the library of Crazy Castle that, brooding over his Pantagruelian studies, Sterne evolved the Rabelaisian fantasia to which he chose to give the name of *Tristram Shandy*. His neglect, or worse (it was his fate, he complained, always to be miserably in love with some one outside his domestic circle), caused the estrangement and removal of his wife, and, relieved rather than otherwise by this riddance of domestic responsibility, Sterne, aged forty-five, turned for diversion to composition. He was astonished at his own facility, and produced in rapid succession the chapters of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy*. These were published at York on January 1st, 1760. Two months later Garrick was spreading their fame in London, whither Sterne hurried in March to sip the first honey of popular applause and to widen the range of his flirtations.

It is not in the least extraordinary that the critics should have been exercised about Sterne's style; there is a strong disturbing element in it, and a peculiar restlessness, which to the older school of writers was fidgeting and exasperating. The author had mastered the lesson of Swift's *Polite Conversation*; he avoided the communisms and vulgarisms of his age as if they had been venomous. Sterne was, in a word, the foremost of the impressionists in English style. By the constant use of gestures and short dialogues, interjections and soliloquies, by his intent analysis of fleeting human moods, he isolated the veriest trifles for the purpose of enshrining them with unaccustomed honours amidst his wonderful gallery of portraits. He carefully sought a pathetic cadence for those exquisite little pieces of prose *genre*, until such episodes or *morceaux* (they can scarcely be called incidents) as "Tristram and the Ass," or "Uncle Toby and the Fly," attain to an unrivalled purity and perfection of style—a style as "unstitched" and conversational as can be, but full of happy terms and glancing expressions, and as rapid and idiomatic as is to be found in our literature. With all Sterne's apparent caprice of manner, there is usually not

a touch in any of his pictures that could be spared without marring the effect. It is, says the first of English critics, "the pure essence of English conversational style."

In his intimate manner of thought, as a sentimental deist, as in his style of expression, Sterne is the sport of his emotional impulses; and he falls an easy victim to the rising tide of "sentiment" or "sensibility," of which he was to be an apostle. Marivaux and Richardson are now left far behind; and as the century advances, the claims of sensibility get more and more exacting, until it becomes necessary for the hero continually to be in heroics, and the heroine always palpitating. An emotion comes to be regarded as a thing to be isolated, dandled, and savoured deliberately, almost scientifically. Sterne, with his demonstrations of "moral entomology" and his floods of tears (where a discreet quiver of the eyelid would be ample), thoroughly believed in and recklessly indulged in this inexpensive pastime. Like all exaggerations, it is bad art (and in inferior hands it becomes a source of inexpressible torment to the reader); but we must remember that Sterne used it to conquer a new domain for the novel—almost for literature. His methods have descended to hundreds of imitators, and when by imitators of discretion and genuine talent, such as Saintine, Xavier de Maistre, or Charles Nodier, commonly with success.

Like Richardson's work, *Tristram Shandy*¹ had a better reception in the French capital, where Rousseau had prepared the public taste for it, than in London. Sterne himself went to Paris, like Hume, to "have his renown ratified"; and Garat gives us a brief portrait of the man, "always the same, never influenced by plans, but always carried away by impressions," at the theatre, in the *salon*, and on the Pont Neuf, where he prostrated himself, amid a crowd of admirers, before the statue of Henri IV. Voltaire compared him "à ces petits satires de l'antiquité qui renferment des essences précieuses." Leaving Paris Sterne went south, like "Smelfungus" (as he called Smollett), for his health, and spent two years around Montpellier. His popularity abroad reached its climax, not in *Tristram* (the ninth and last volume of which appeared in 1764), but in his second book, *A Sentimental Journey*

in *France and Italy*, published in two duodecimo volumes in February, 1768. It was designed, he tells us, to make us love the world and our fellow-creatures better than we do; and it contains numerous references to his intrigue with Eliza Draper ("Eliza the second"), the fair Anglo-Italian coquette, whose departure for India in April, 1767, he had bewailed with all the resources of sentimental art. Less than two months after its appearance Sterne died in Bond Street, London (March 18th, 1768).

There are admirers of Sterne in England, as well as in France and Germany, who prefer the *Sentimental Journey to Tristram*. It is a record of fresh impressions, conversations, interruptions, and fleeting amours by the greatest master we have of the colloquial *milieu* in English prose, and it exhibits his impressionism at its most sensitive pitch. A lambent satire upon the travellers who went to Italy to verify Latin inscriptions and to publish their results plays over the whole. But there is one capital omission in the *Sentimental Journey*. One misses irremediably the Shandean group of portraits. It is, it seems to us, in the marvellous distinctness with which these creations detach themselves from his too-bespattered and often confused canvas that Sterne's grandeur really lies. Amid affectation, tediousness, leering, and obscenity, we come to passages relating to these remarkable figures, which stand out like *chef-d'œuvre* in a gallery of uninspired replicas and other fifth-rate compositions. The characters of my Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim, of Mr. and Mrs. Shandy, of the Widow Wadman, of Dr. Slop, and even minor persons such as Obadiah and Bridget, are depicted with strokes of a masterly vigour. A few of the canvases of Jan Steen have something of the same power to arrest one by their striking animation and fidelity to the life. As a detached fragment few passages in our literature are worthy to compare with the death of Le Fèvre. The effect is instantaneous. In one moment our sympathy is irresistibly arrested. It is the magic of style. As for Uncle Toby, we feel almost at once the desirability of his friendship; we admire the good old soldier, sympathise with his hobby, and take the keenest interest in his campaign against the Widow Wadman, unworthy though she be of his affections. My Uncle Toby, says Hazlitt decisively, is one of

¹ Vols. iii. and iv. of which had appeared in 1761, and vols. v. and vi. in 1762. The Lives of Sterne by Traill and Fitzgerald are supplemented by Dr. Sidney Lee's elaborate memoir in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*

the finest compliments ever paid to human nature. "Nothing odd can live," said Johnson, and *Tristram Shandy* is the quintessence of oddity; but it will take a good many centuries to kill Shandy; he will outlast our day.

The books referred to in this and the preceding chapter are "the classics," and the four authors—Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne—may be considered as the founders of the English novel. Apart from the great figure of Swift and his prodigious legacy to readers of all nations, and the epic prose of *Robinson Crusoe*, no literary product of the eighteenth century in Britain has an equal claim to rank as "world literature" with the English novel, as shaped by these four masters. Its great points obtained for it a cosmopolitan influence; the modern student is in little danger of overlooking its bad points, which are upon the surface. There is no denying that the "classic" novel takes an exceedingly low view of human nature; it has not been ill described as attempting to play upon life as upon a fiddle without a bridge, in the deliberate endeavour to get the most depressing tone possible from the instrument. This is the refined view of the roguery and the exuberant horse-play which abounds in the work of Fielding and Smollett. There is certainly not to be found here either the idealism of the Elizabethan dramatists or the benignity of the great nineteenth-century group of English novelists. The prevalent aim is to show us the seamy side of life and to "expose" vice; and there is much of the ironic spirit of *Jonathan Wild* about the endeavour. In the latter half of the eighteenth century, unlike the present day, the philosophers were the optimists, and it was left to the novelists to project the black shadows. Their object seems often to be to show how bad men may be; and in Fielding and Smollett, at least, there is a refreshing absence of cant. Books which conceal so little are necessarily not fit for the perusal of babes and sucklings. They are eminently the books of men living in the world, thoroughly conversant with its miry ways—the rough-and-tumble of the human comedy—but saved by their manliness and their strong sense of humour from the crude materialism and brutal nihilism of some modern "realists." After all, these four writers in England first thoroughly fertilised the grand field of the modern novel. Richardson obtained the greatest European fame; Sterne exercised

the greatest influence upon subsequent English prose. But Fielding and Smollett achieved more in welding the novel as a literary instrument. Fielding was the great pioneer in this work, but Smollett, by his greater modernity, vigour, and directness, exercised a more rapid influence upon posterity.

After the great, in the history of the novel, come the infinitely little. From 1750 onwards the presses of London swarmed with duodecimo fiction, at three shillings a volume. *Pamela* and *Clarissa* opened the flood-gates of sentimental love fiction, as Fielding and Smollett opened the flood-gates of romantic adventure. From the adventures of bucks and libertines, of parish girls and orphans, the exhausted market was revived by a series of chroniclers of animals, such as lap-dogs, cats, and fleas, and of others still who related the adventures of things inanimate, such as guineas, coats, bank-notes, rupees, and ladies' slippers. The great novelists of the past, such as Cervantes and Le Sage, attracted a fresh army of camp-followers and imitators. The adaptations of the central idea of *Don Quixote* are legion. Two of the best specimens belonging to our period may well be mentioned in this place. The first is *The Female Quixote* (1752) of Charlotte Lennox, a lady highly esteemed by Richardson and by the "Great Cham" himself. Johnson thus summarised the scheme of the book in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for March, 1752: "Arabella (the Female Quixote) is the daughter of a statesman, born after his retirement in disgrace, and educated in solitude at his castle in a remote province. The romances which she found in the library after her mother's death were almost the only books she read; from these, therefore, she derived her ideas of life; she believed the business of the world to be love, every incident to be the beginning of an adventure, and every stranger a knight in disguise." The idea, good enough in itself, was worked out in a sadly monotonous manner, and the book is almost forgotten, though Johnson wrote the dedication, Fielding praised, and Mr. Austin Dobson has devoted a "vignette" to it. After a life of scribbling, poor Mrs. Lennox died an almoner of the Literary Fund in 1804.

The second is *The Spiritual Quixote* (1772) of Richard Graves (1715—1804), a prolific novelist and versifier of the Prior Park coterie at Bath. This is a book of greater calibre

than the other, having a skilfully devised plot, and containing many amusing incidents narrated in a homely but effective style. The special purpose, for novels even then had a "purpose," was to ridicule the intrusion of the laity into spiritual functions, and to satirise the "enthusiasm" of the Methodists. This enthusiasm had come under Graves's observation in the obnoxious form of a shoemaker, who had started a meeting-house in his parish within a stone's throw of the rectory.

Another faint satellite of the Quixotic school was the great novelist's sister, Sarah Fielding (1710—1768), who published in 1744 her rambling *Adventures of David Simple*. A more virile and independent novel, begotten to some extent, no doubt, by the suggestive episodes in *Pamela*, is the *John Buncle* (1756) of Thomas Amory (1691—1788), an eccentric recluse of Irish descent, which, though very little known, has the recommendation of being one of the most singular productions in the language. It is a Unitarian romance by an "English Rabelais." Wisdom and mirth take their turn, body and soul are equally attended to. The hero is a great philosopher, mathematician, anatomist, chemist, philologist, and divine, with a good appetite, the best spirits, and an amorous constitution, who sets out on a series of strange adventures to propagate his philosophy, his divinity, and his species with a charming impartiality, and encounters in the process a succession of accomplished females, adorned with equal wit, beauty, and virtue, who are always ready to discuss all manner of theoretical and practical points with him. Hence a candour greater than the candour of Voltaire's *Candide* and "a modesty equal to that of Colley Cibber."

From this naïve and unclassifiable fantasia, which is an indispensable adjunct of every book-lover's top shelf, we must pass on to several "Robinsonaden," or varieties of the type of *voyages imaginaires*, such as *The Travels and Adventures of William Bingfield, Esquire* (1751) or the better-known *Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins* (1751) by Robert Paltock (1697—1767), an obscure London attorney. With hints from Gulliver and the Lunar Fables of Cyrano, and Bishop Wilkins, Paltock despatches his hero in search of a wife, through a subterranean cavern beneath the South Pole, into a new world in which his senses are dazzled by the beautiful flying Gouwarkee. Paltock has been

highly praised for his imaginative power, and for his creation of a new species of winged beings; but he was far eclipsed, in popularity at any rate, by the creator of that curious little *jeu d'esprit*, *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of his Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia* (1785). The author of this was a Hanoverian, Rudolf Eric Raspe (1737—1794), who fled to England to escape the police, mastered the language, and threw off *Baron Munchausen* (1785) in the form of a shilling chap-book—in return, no doubt, for a bookseller's dole in relief of his immediate necessities. It was compiled from odds and ends of his notes and recollections, but it crackles with a dry humour of its own, not unworthy of Lucian, the first master of the *genre*. Imitations have abounded, both in England and abroad, especially in America, and the genuine *Munchausen* has been smothered by successive sequels.

Among the novel-purveyors of the period of Scott's youth must also be recorded Cumberland the dramatist, Holcroft the autobiographer, and Robert Bage (1728—1801), whose novels Scott seems to have read with discrimination, for he pronounces *Hermesprang* and *Barham Downs* to have been the best of them. Both Holcroft and Bage, revolutionaries in politics, were reactionary, not to say tedious, in prose narrative. Hugh Kelly, the dramatist, also appealed to the unsavoury sentiments of his time in a novel called *Memoirs of a Magdalen* (1767); greatly superior both in taste and style was *The Simple Story* (1791) of Mrs. Inchbald. Two years later came a somewhat similar tale of Charlotte Smith called *The Old Manor House*, which was written at Earham, and is said to have enchanted Cowper during his stay there. Later still we have the *Father and Daughter* (1801) of Mrs. Amelia Opie, a story of domestic tenderness, in which the influence of Sterne is manifest. The chief of Sterne's imitators, however, was of course the lachrymose Henry Mackenzie (1745—1831), for many years Nestor of the Northern Athens, friend of Hume, patron of Burns, and Teutonic pioneer of Sir Walter Scott. Having imitated Addison and Steele in *The Mirror* and *Lounger*, Mackenzie proceeded in his novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771) to imitate Sterne. Mackenzie was an essayist of some merit, and a credit to literature in Edinburgh society; but his novels do no more than supply a loose and feeble succession of scenes, designed to

awaken the tender or passionate sensibilities. In his last novel, *Julia de Roubigné* (1777), in which he also denounces the slave trade, he essays a tragic plot; but the prettiness he shows in painting refinements of feeling and etiquette is ill suited to the strain of a catastrophe which involves the anguish of passion. Mackenzie lived to the age of eighty-six, much respected as a patriarch of letters in the northern capital.

Another imitator of the accidental rather than the essential qualities of Sterne is Henry Brooke, of all a discursive race (that of novelists) perhaps the most discursive, even in England. An alumnus of Trinity College, Dublin, a prolific poet and tragic writer (author of *Gustavus Vasa* and of *The Earl of Essex*, 1749, in which the mouth-filling line, "Who rule o'er freemen should themselves be free," elicited Johnson's parody, "Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat"), Henry Brooke (1703—1783) commenced in 1766 the publication of his remarkable novel, *The Fool of Quality*, which extended to five volumes. The book (the title of which seems to have been suggested by a line in *The Dunciad*) received the imprimatur of John Wesley as of unimpeachable morality, but more than a Wesley's authority is needed to procure it a constant supply of readers. It records the education by an ideal merchant prince of an ideal noble, Henry Moreland, who is a pattern of "natural" education and simple virtue—a pattern too closely followed for a long time to allow the heroes of English novels to be regarded as other than unmitigated bores. But the story proper is overlaid by moral digressions of such interminable length that, despite the great mental qualities of the writer, the book is losing itself in the sands of oblivion. "Artistically it is a chaos, and such unity as it has is due chiefly to the binder."

There are three outstanding pieces of prose fiction which have with more or less logical intent been treated of elsewhere in this work.

Rasselas, Dr. Johnson's story of the meditations of princes and philosophers in the pursuit of the *feu follet* of happiness, is less a novel proper than a rhetorical excursion in imaginative ethics, based mainly, in regard to method, upon the framework of a *voyage imaginaire*.

Goldsmith's exquisite idyll of *The Vicar of Wakefield* is certainly the emanation of a genius akin to that which created Sir Roger de Coverley. Goldsmith, however, was extremely little affected by his contemporaries, and so it is hard to assign him a definite position in the succession from Richardson to Jane Austen. On the other hand, the influence of *The Vicar* abroad, in conjunction with Rousseau or not, has been profound and far-reaching. Through Rousseau, Diderot, Marmontel, Bernardin de St. Pierre, Goldoni, it has swayed the writers of the Latin nations; while through Wieland, Hermes, Nicolai, and Sebaldus it has dominated Germany. Goldsmith's direct influence upon Herder and Goethe, and later on Jean Paul, was very great, and has not yet been accurately estimated. As wielded by Richardson, Sterne, and Goldsmith, English romance went forth to conquer the world.

Rasselas and *The Vicar of Wakefield* were both written about the same time that Sterne was creating Walter Shandy and his wife, Uncle Toby, Dr. Slop, and Corporal Trim (1759-62). Fanny Burney's *Evelina* appeared in 1778, when there was a complete dearth of new prose fiction of anything approaching tolerable quality. Lydia Languish may well have been ashamed of the latest productions of the circulating library—for already by 1775 the novel had created the circulating library. But for this dearth, and the mysterious youth and freshness of the fair author, we cannot believe that *Evelina* would have made the sensation that it did. The style of portraiture is rather that of the Hook, Cockton, Mayhew, and Albert Smith order. The freshness of its impressions, however, is unmistakable. *Evelina* herself is a modest, intelligent, and good-hearted girl, set to shine among fops and fools, vulgarians and worldlings. The first part is undoubtedly dull, but when the love affair with Lord Orville comes to the surface, the cleverness and charm of the heroine seem to envelop us. "Burney" is in a large measure superseded and surpassed by Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell. Fanny's *Diary*, on the other hand, seems to have gained in attractiveness by the lapse of time. After Pepys, it is almost if not quite the most interesting diary that we have.

CHAPTER III

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS—I

"The name of Chesterfield has become a synonym for good breeding and politeness. It is associated in our minds with all that is graceful in manner and cold in heart. The image it calls up is that of a man rather below the middle height, in a court suit and blue riband, with regular features, wearing an habitual expression of gentlemanlike ease. His address is insinuating, his bow perfect, his compliments—irresistible."—A. HAYWARD, *Biographical and Critical Essays*.

"I always frequented the society of my superiors. . . . Dr. Swift and Mr. Pope condescended to admit me into their company, and though they had no titles and I was an earl, I always felt that I was obliged by their politeness, and was favoured by being allowed to converse with them."—LORD CHESTERFIELD.

Lord Chesterfield—Lord Hervey—Lady Mary Montagu—Earl of Waldegrave—Bubb Dodington—*The Grenville Papers*.

THERE are two noble lords among the wits of the eighteenth century, and both of them have suffered rather severely (by what Emerson might have called a law of compensation) from their fellow-wits for their titles and decorations. Titles, it has been truly said, adorn mediocrity, but only embarrass superior minds. Unconsciously, moreover, they excite in the literary critic a kind of posthumous jealousy of the assumed princely revenues of their owners, and a secret resentment against the dandified assumption of superiority on the part of these latter over professional authors. With the lapse of time, however, and by slow gradations, Literature learns to forgive social advantages, and to recognise in the literary tableaux afforded to us by Lord Chesterfield and Lord Orford (Horace Walpole), respectively of society ideals and society manners in the eighteenth century, two of the most fascinating and most permanent contributions ever made to English letters.

Under the first two Georges, English society became consolidated into what Disraeli, with his accustomed iridescence, described as a Venetian oligarchy. The chronicling of the doings and delineation of the manners of such a society could hardly fail to become an important branch of literature. The letters and memoirs of the eighteenth century are thus among its most characteristic products, and on the whole it is no exaggeration to say that they make up one of the most fascinating chapters in our literary history. Taken together, they give an incom-

parable picture of the life of the aristocracy or privileged classes in this country from 1715 to 1832. Moreover, they enable us to pierce beyond the external surface, and, by piecing together here a piece and there a piece, to get not only a superficial view of the brilliances and follies, but a shrewd idea also of the by-play, and the back-stair intrigue, and the secret springs by which so much of this world's stage machinery, whether under a democracy or an aristocracy, is inevitably moved. On the whole, they form a unique tableau or picture of the administrative and leisured classes of a great nation, and the eighteenth century is thus self-portrayed with a vividness and a picturesqueness probably unrivalled save in the parallel picture of French society as depicted in French memoirs from 1640 to 1790.

Before going on to the great memoir-writers of the last three quarters of the eighteenth century, one must endeavour to give a brief outline of a very important and outstanding figure in English literature, who has been in an especial degree the victim of unfair literary depreciation. The figure in question is that of Lord Chesterfield, a brilliant acquisition to English letters, to which he added not a little of the grace and polish which Boileau and La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and St. Simon had given to the literature of France, and one of the greatest masters of English prose style. In Chesterfield we seem to get a glimpse for the first time of the rapier in English prose.

The training that surrounded the young

Chesterfield was aristocratic at every point. The son of an earl, and the grandson, on his mother's side, of the witty George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, Philip Dormer Stanhope was born in London on September 22nd, 1694, and educated privately and at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he conceived an enthusiasm for the Latin classics, against which he thought it right to be on his guard. He emerged from Cambridge; he once said, a "complete pedant." He became a perfect master of French, and graduated in manners at Antwerp, at the petty court maintained by Marlborough at Antwerp after his fall. At twenty-one Stanhope became a Gentleman of the Bedchamber and a member of Parliament. He also became a member of that famous oligarchical and gaming stronghold (White's Club), and a familiar figure in the salons of Paris. In 1726 he took his seat in the House of Lords, and two years later became ambassador at The Hague. Walpole's antipathy procured his dismissal. Nevertheless, when the Pelhams came in at the beginning of 1745, Chesterfield was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and next year was appointed as one of the two secretaries of state. He was judicious, conciliatory, honest, and patriotic in all his employments; but his sharp tongue and biting wit, which were never fully under control, made him many enemies, and he was a politically disappointed man—one to whom high office came too late. He retired from active political life in 1748, from which date until his death on March 24th, 1773, he lived at Chesterfield House in influential and dignified retirement, spending a great portion of his time in reading and writing.¹ His widow, a natural daughter of George I., to secure whose dowry he had to threaten George II. with litigation, died in 1778.

Apart from his political work—he was an admirable speaker, and one of the best lord lieutenants Ireland ever had—the chief occupation of Chesterfield's life was the education, through the medium of a series of familiar letters, of his illegitimate son Philip (Stanhope). His father wished this son to be as near perfection as possible, and therefore, in addition to providing the most efficient tutors and giving him every advantage that his position could command, from the year 1737, when the boy was only five years old, until 1768, when he

died, he showered upon him a series of nearly five hundred letters, many of them of great length—letters of advice and counsel, all breathing the most patient forethought and the most devoted interest in his son's career. Whatever faults Chesterfield had, he was certainly a good father. The letters were not intended for publicity. They were, however, committed to the press by the son's widow (who got £1,500 for them) in 1774. A number of letters in another series which Chesterfield addressed to his godson were first published in 1817. Chesterfield also wrote three or four admirable essays for *Fog's Journal* and *The World*, a few short *Characters* of eminent personages of his own time,² and a few speeches and other political pieces.

Son Philip seems to have been a stolid Anglo-Dutch young man. He was by no means deficient in the solid virtues; but he had none of the small change of self-denial to which his father attached so much importance and gave the names of good manners, *les mœurs*, *minores virtutes*, or finally "the graces." Chesterfield set himself to remedy the defect, and, by dint of constantly dwelling upon the subject in his mind, evolved and embodied in his letters a consistent philosophy of good breeding. The exposition is appropriate in every way to the text, for it is the perfection of tact, neatness, good order, and *savoir faire*. Not the high morality of a St. Paul or a Cato the censor, we may admit; but a high standard of conduct, nevertheless, judged by the actual practice of men of the world, framed in the charming literary and epicurean style of a Horace. His ideal was, he admitted, for his son to combine the good qualities of a French and English gentleman. As a practical ideal this is surely not deficient in elevation. Philip was constitutionally debarred from developing into an exquisite; but he became a well-equipped, sensible, and honest diplomatist, and retained his father's affection until his early death at Avignon in 1768.

Chesterfield was an aristocrat to the backbone, and we must always remember that in these letters he was addressing a member of his own class, a class among which a more or less conspicuous position in the world was regarded as a birthright—a class, too, singularly deficient on that side of things in which Chesterfield

¹ Or gardening at his country-house of Babiole, Blackheath.

² Published separately by Flexney in 1777.

himself was most defective—the side of poetry and the higher imagination, the blind side of an opulent, administrative caste. This is seen in his express directions for the suppression of laughter, directions which have always seemed to us the greatest blemish in the philosophy of a fellow-countryman of Falstaff's. But the *Letters* more than merit the innumerable eulogies that have been lavished on them. Croker sums up the book as "a masterpiece of good taste, good writing, and good sense." Voltaire paid its writer the highest compliment perhaps that it was in his power to pay: "*You have never been a charlatan or the dupe of charlatans.*" Sainte-Beuve consecrated a truly splendid Essay to Chesterfield, in which he says of the *Letters*: "You cannot read a page without finding some happy observation worthy of being remembered."

The real St. Simon of the court of George II., though without St. Simon's sense of proportion as to style or delicacy of perception in regard to measure, was John, Lord Hervey, remorseless Hervey of the "coffin face and painted cheeks." Younger son of John Hervey, first Earl of Bristol, Lord Hervey was born in 1696. Educated at Westminster under the much-celebrated Dr. Friend, he inherited a gift for repartee and a fondness for the manipulation of rhyme from both parents, but especially from his mother. Early in 1720, a handsome youth of twenty-four, he seems to have secretly married "Youth's youngest daughter, sweet Lepell," and earned the resentment of Pope, who had frequently been a visitor at Richmond to pay court, not to the Prince and Princess, but to the lovely Molly Lepell. The charms of the same lady drew some English verses from Voltaire, a eulogium from Chesterfield, and a dedication from Horace Walpole! From this coterie the young couple both derived "advanced" views both in regard to conduct and religion. Hervey became heir to the title in 1725, by the death of Carr Hervey, and in the new reign his advancement was assured; after a spell of foreign travel in the attempt to restore his health (undermined by that "detestable and poisonous plant tea") he was pensioned and made Vice-Chamberlain with the special object of serving as Walpole's agent about the person of Queen Caroline, whose closest confidences he shared. Walpole also employed his incisive pen to refute the libels of Pulteney and

The Craftsman. Pulteney's venom in response suggested many of the ugly insinuations which Pope afterwards worked up into his stinging caricatures of Lord Fanny and of Sporus—"Sporus, that mere white curd of ass's milk." After the Queen's death he was raised to the Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, but was jerked out of office by the fall of Walpole, much against his own inclinations. Thenceforth he made some telling speeches in opposition until his death at Ickworth on August 9th, 1743. His youngest daughter continued to exhibit down to 1819 those peculiarities which gave rise to Lady Mary W. Montagu's saying that the world consisted of "men, women, and Herveys." His famous *Memoirs of the Reign of George down to the Death of Queen Caroline* were composed during the last fifteen years of his life. They were alluded to by Horace Walpole (who may have seen them) in 1759,¹ but the autograph MS. was not actually printed until 1848, when it appeared (with omissions) under the editorship of J. Wilson Croker. These *Memoirs* give a most wonderfully vivid picture of the court of the second George from the pen of an aulical Bozzy who was always behind the scenes. The chief *dramatis personæ* in the strange comedy which he presents are the King, the Prince, Sir Robert Walpole, Pulteney, Bolingbroke, Wyndham, and Chesterfield. The political scandal of the present day is attributed to a generous emulation among the clubs, but it pales before the cynicism with which Hervey seems to have regarded nearly every one of his colleagues and contemporaries. He sees all their characters *en noir*, and depicts them with merciless satire. His portrait of the King (George II.) is one of the grimmest revelations ever made of a royal personage. Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, the Prince (with whom he had quarrelled about a maid of honour)—he hated them all. The elaboration of the sentences and of the antitheses detract somewhat from the truth of the picture, and from the skilful choice of words, for Hervey was a master of the adjective. In studied detraction, however, his *Memoirs* are unrivalled.²

The first half of the eighteenth century boasts a blue-stocking whom subsequent ages of the higher education of women have not yet succeeded in surpassing. Quickness of perception, descriptive power, and sardonic judgment, combined to an extent rare either in man or woman,

¹ *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*.

² *Quarterly Review*, clxiv., 501.

were certainly united in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Born in rooms at Covent Garden on May 26th, 1689, Mary Pierrepont became Lady Mary in the following year, when her father succeeded to the Earldom of Kingston. A natural impulse and the presence of a fine library at Thoresby stimulated her to become a serious student, and she allowed neither a stupid governess nor good looks to divert her from a course of patient self-culture. By the help of an uncommon memory and indefatigable labour she taught herself Latin, and she soon became known among her acquaintance for her love of books and learning. When she was fourteen her scholarly accomplishments attracted the attention of Edward Wortley (afterwards Wortley Montagu), who directed her studies for some years under cover of letters addressed to the young lady by his sister Anne Wortley. This curious relationship gradually ripened into a strangely candid and wide-awake courtship, Lady Mary debating questions of love and marriage with all the sagacious gravity of a correspondent to *The Spectator*. As a child Lady Mary was a toast of the Kit-Cat Club, and her lover was a respected member of the inner circle of cultivated Whigs, a friend of Addison and Steele (the second volume of *The Tatler* was dedicated to him), a Parliament man, and safe candidate for a good "place" in a Whig administration. Unfortunately the gentleman had difficulties with Lady Mary's father, now Duke of Kingston, about settlements, and the only solution was found in an elopement (August, 1712). In 1716 Mr. Wortley was appointed ambassador extraordinary to the Porte, and the next year was spent by him, his wife, and son in Turkey. His wife's letters from Adrianople and Constantinople are admirable pieces of composition, extraordinarily modern in style, being easy, natural, flowing, and full of agreeable description. In describing, she is careful to avoid exaggeration, and her chief ado is to disabuse the minds of her correspondents of the absurd, or at least antiquated, ideas they had derived of Turkish life (especially with regard to slaves and the seraglio) from Rycout and other old writers.

In 1718 she returned to England and settled at Twickenham, by the advice of Pope, who made love to her, but was completely nonplussed by her laughing wit and *grande dame*

self-assurance. Moreover, she showed a preference for Lord Hervey as a friend. This completed the little poet's discomfiture. Trembling with nervous wrath he set to work upon that structure of libellous detraction which caused both of these supposed enemies so much discomfort in after years. The libels that pursued Lady Mary henceforth were in fact as numerous as they are obscure. Her keen satirical wit naturally made her enemies. She became restless and dissatisfied, embittered above all by the misconduct of her only son.

In 1739 (she then being fifty and her husband sixty-one) she went abroad on a prolonged course of foreign travel. Her letters to her husband imply that they still remained on friendly terms, and she speaks of him to their daughter (Lady Bute) with affection. He did not follow her, but continued to live in solitary retirement at Wharnccliffe, where he died, a confirmed miser, in 1761. Her letters are dated successively from Venice, Florence, Rome, Geneva, Avignon, Brescia, Lovere (summer quarters on the Lago d'Iseo), and Padua. Their tone is different from that of her former correspondence, being much more discursive than descriptive. The letters deal largely with family and personal matters, but there is much gossip about people of quality in England, and some diverting book gossip—mainly about the novels of the day by Henry and "Sally" Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett (*Peregrine Pickle* she specially admired). She relates how she spent her evenings at Lovere teaching three old priests to take a hand at "whist at a penny a corner." A woman of strong, rather unsympathetic understanding, with a decided tendency to satire, she professed a good-natured contempt for the small beer of Madame de Sevigné; nevertheless, as she got older her letters came more and more to resemble this excellent model, and the resemblance is helped by the fact that most of the letters are to her daughter, Lady Bute. Besides the letters she wrote fragments of historical memoirs, a few translations, and a quantity of light verse of mediocre quality.

She returned to England only eight months before her death on August 21st, 1762.¹ Her letters, printed surreptitiously in 1763, were edited by her great-grandson, Lord Wharnccliffe, with interesting "Introductory Anec-

¹ There is a cenotaph to her memory in Lichfield Cathedral, commemorating her efforts in the introduction from the East of inoculation from smallpox.

dotes" by her granddaughter in 1837, and with important additions by Moy Thomas in 1861.

Among the minor memoirs of the second and third quarters of this century, before proceeding to our protagonist in memoir literature, the great little Horace, we must just mention (we can do little more) the memoirs of Waldegrave and Bubb Dodington, and the important collection of letters, diaries, and papers known as *The Grenville Papers*. James, second Earl of Waldegrave, a great-grandson of James II., and son of a Catholic who turned Protestant, became a favourite of George II., and was raised to be a lord of the bedchamber and a governor of Prince George, afterwards George III., with whom he was not popular. Though "unlovely" emphatically, both in address and appearance, Waldegrave set up as a man of gallantry and pleasure, and a few years before his death from smallpox in 1763 (aged only forty-eight) he married Walpole's niece, the handsomest woman in England. During the "interministerium" before Pitt he was Premier for five days (June 8th—12th, 1757), so that he had a close insight into everything that was going on during the period of which he writes (1754-8). The real interest of his *Memoirs* consists in the carefully weighed characters which he draws of the chief actors, and the strong contrast of these portraits to the sinister silhouettes of the ultra-clever and not too scrupulous Hervey. Thus in his portrait of George II. Waldegrave insists upon, as the two really salient features in the likeness, the king's passion for business and his keen knowledge (surpassing that of any of his ministers) of foreign affairs. Lord Walpole edited his *Memoirs* in one quarto volume (Murray, 1821).

Among the Tapers and Tadpoles of the "broad-bottom administration" we are fortunate in getting a three-quarter length portrait of so interesting and typical a fortune-hunter as George Bubb Dodington, who by a long course of "disagreeable compliances" and grotesque

contortions raised himself to £5,000 a year and a peerage as Baron Melcombe. He died at Hammersmith, aged seventy, on July 28th, 1762. In the days of his splendour he sought to become a patron of letters, and was accepted as such by Young, Thomson, and Fielding, but was spurned by Johnson. A diligent student of Tacitus, Bubb compiled himself a large quantity of political papers and memoranda. He left these to a distant cousin, Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, on condition that those alone should be published which did honour to his memory. Wyndham published the *Diary* in 1784, persuading himself by some judicious sophistry that the phrase in the will was no barrier to such a proceeding.

The *Diary* forms the most curious illustration perhaps in existence of the character of the servile place-hunters of the time with unctuous professions of virtuous sentiment and disgust at venality, which serve only to heighten the effect. It must be said in Bubb's honour that he united with Chesterfield and Walpole in trying to save Byng. His *Diary*, though carelessly compiled, contains some curious historical information, especially as to the Prince and Princess, during the period which it covers, from 1748 to 1760.

The Grenville Papers (ed. W. J. Smith, 4 vols., Murray, 1852) contains the correspondence and papers of two really prominent statesmen, George Grenville and Richard Grenville, Earl Temple (the inspirer of Junius), from the original manuscripts at Stowe. They include "Grenville's Diary," a narrative of his great quarrel with the atrabilious Temple, a long disquisition on the Junius problem, and all kinds of interesting and important personal memoranda, covering roughly the twenty years from 1750 to 1770. They must be distinguished from the *Grenville Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III.*, another large collection in four volumes of political papers and family memoranda, from original sources, but of much less independent value, covering the period 1782-1810.¹

¹ The two most complete editions of Chesterfield's *Letters* are those by Lord Mahon, 5 vols., 1845-53 (see *Quarterly Review*, clii.), and J. Bradshaw, 3 vols., 1892. There are innumerable abridgments and selections, a good one in the Camelot Classics. See also Charles Strachey's edition of the *Letters to his Son* (2 vols., 1901), the *Selections* by J. Hain Friswell (Bayard Series, 1870) and Birkbeck Hill (1891), and the *Memoirs* by Maty, Hayward, Churton Collins, Craig, Lee, and W. Ernst (1893). The sneers aimed at Chesterfield by Mrs. Oliphant, by Charles Dickens, and by Dr. Johnson, who said of the famous letters that they taught "the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master," are only very partially deserved. The real nobility of the man is shown in the story of the burlesque family pedigree which he drew up, commencing "Adam de Stanhope" and "Eve de Stanhope"; or the pendent story of the bequest of two years' wages to his servants, with the remark that he regarded them as "unfortunate friends, my equals by nature and my inferiors only by the difference of our fortunes."

CHAPTER IV

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS—II

"The history of England, throughout a very large segment of the eighteenth century, is simply a synonym for the works of Horace Walpole."—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

Horace Walpole—Mrs. Delany—Mrs. Thrale—Fanny Burney—Wraxall—Richard Cumberland—Thomas Creevey.

HORACE, christened Horatio, Walpole was the third and youngest son of the great statesman, and was born in Arlington Street on October 15th, 1717. In 1727 he went to Eton, where his father had been the companion of Bolingbroke. At Eton he first met the poet Thomas Gray, with whom, after leaving King's College, Cambridge, in 1739, he set out on the grand tour. One was a student of art and poetry on the way to become a scholar; the other, if a budding virtuoso, yet at the same time a fine gentleman and very fond of company; so that it is scarcely to be wondered at that they did not get on particularly well together.

Walpole was snobbish and insolent to Gray, who was stiff and unconciliatory. The result was that they parted immediately after leaving Florence, where Walpole made the acquaintance of his lifelong correspondent Sir Horace Mann. Fortunately the two schoolfellows were reconciled by 1747, when Gray sent to Walpole those famous lines *On the Death of a Favourite Cat drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes*. On his return Horace was nominated for the Government borough of Callington. He was provided through his father's influence with the sinecures which would then be regarded as the natural perquisites of a younger son of the prime minister, amounting to a secure income of well over £4,000 a year.

As Chesterfield, with his exasperating serenity, appeared to look upon politics as a game for the gratification of his own keen sense of comedy, so Walpole regarded them, and kept n touch with them, largely as a means of supplying his friends with *nouvelles à la main*.

After his return from abroad and the death of his father his real hobbies were his correspondence, the cottage which he turned into a printing office, the notorious *Officina Arbutæana* or Strawberry Hill Press, and the *à la mode* toy-woman's country maisonette which he aspired to convert into a Gothic castle—a feudal château without and a combination of Hertford House, Soane Museum, and Madame Tussaud's within. This wonderful house "just out of Twickenham," which he first took in May, 1747, and which from being a "rustic" villa built by a retired coachman (hence nicknamed Chopped-Straw Hall) he gradually transformed into a toy castle, as Louis XIV. evolved Versailles from a small hunting-château—this structure became for a long period the central fact of his existence.

Compiler and memoir-writer, builder and planter, virtuoso, the voluminous correspondent of Mann, Mason, the Countess of Ossory, Madame du Deffand and his "amours," his "twin wives," as he called them, the two Miss Berrys, Walpole was surely the busiest man of leisure in or about London. Yet it may be that he was at his happiest and best not as a correspondent but as a raconteur. We have a delightful picture of him in this capacity in the *Walpoliana* issued by John Pinkerton.

Of Walpole's later years, his fortunate friendship with the Miss Berrys and his death at a ripe old age in the appropriate atmosphere of Berkeley Square on March 2nd, 1797, there is little to say. He was a very grudging critic, and as a retribution his own great qualities as a littérateur have been too long eclipsed

by the severely moral estimate of Macaulay.¹ As a matter of fact, when you admit that he was a little dry, a little disdainful, a little difficult; when you add that he was rather selfish and rather mean, at times inclined to be very punctilious and exacting, but mellowing with age and knowledge of the world, and that his delicate frame rendered him irritable, the bad part will have been told; and, frankly, in what one calls the "world," is this a very severe burden with which to load his memory? He is continually actuated by the strongest desire to please, and there is scarcely a dull page in the sixteen volumes of his published correspondence. To stigmatise as affected the coquetry with which such a man endeavours to veil his foibles would be nothing short of gross ingratitude.

Apart from his wonderful correspondence, the best and ripest works of Walpole are those which most nearly approach it in general character: such are his backstairs *Memoirs of the Last Ten Years of the Reign of George II.*, a somewhat acid but most entertaining sketch of the political intrigues of the post-Walpole, post-Hervey epoch, and *Memoirs of the Reign of George III.*, supplemented by a *Journal of the Reign of George III. from 1771 to 1783*. These memoirs were published long after Walpole's death, respectively in 1822, 1845, and 1859. The vitality which Walpole manages to give to the prosaic personages and parliamentary debates of this historical period is truly astonishing. Of his *Castle of Otranto* and his tragedy, *The Mysterious Mother*, it will be necessary to say a word or two elsewhere, though the interest of both has long ceased to be more than merely historical.

It is far otherwise with the *Letters*. The gaiety of these, their point, their pungency, their persiflage, their biographical, historic and documentary interest as re-creating for us a complete period of fifty years (1740-90), with a few years over at either end—these qualities are sufficiently familiar to all connoisseurs of literature who are also connoisseurs of life. They may be maliciously and unscrupulously unfair, they make no attempt to teach you or to preach you, to correct you or ennoble you, but they are amusing. As Thackeray well says, "Fiddles sing all through them, wax lights, fine dresses, fine jokes, fine plate, fine

equipages glitter and sparkle; never was such a brilliant, smirking *Vanity Fair* as that through which he leads us." And they gain enormously from the first-hand air with which he manages to invest all his stories. As stories of the nineteenth century tend to crystallise round the super-eminently picturesque figures of "the Duke," Disraeli, and Sir Walter Scott, so in the eighteenth any personal anecdote gained 20 per cent. in value if it were concerned with Marlborough, Bolingbroke, or Swift. Walpole had sly intimate anecdotes about them all; of Marlborough making wry faces at medicine, for instance, or tying Miss Jennings's garter; and as Hervey in relating some exceptionally tall tale is always ready with "The Queen herself told me"; or Bubb Dodington with "I waited on the Princess, who informed me"; so Walpole is always prepared to invoke "my father" or "my schoolfellow, Lord Bute." "On the death of George I.," he relates, "my father killed two horses in carrying the tidings to his successor." It is true that the credulity of the reader of this Turpinian episode is somewhat strained when he learns that the distance was only from Chelsea to Richmond. "The letters of Lady Wortley Montagu are genuine: I have seen the originals, among which are some far superior to those in print. But some of them were very immodest. She was a playfellow of mine when both were children, and was always a dirty little thing." The lady was twenty-eight when Horace was born! But how refuse credence to the raconteur who finishes the story thus?—"Pope gave her the Homer he had used in translating. I have got it: it is a small edition by Wetstein. *Here it is*. She wrote that little poem in the blank leaves." Equally amusing are some of the stories about Pitt and Newcastle. Distrust is occasionally aroused as we read the *Letters*, but it is soon swallowed up in delight, and we find ourselves echoing Byron's epithet, "Incomparable, *Incomparable*."

The records of the slowly widening aristocratic circle of the eighteenth century are carried on by good hands, and many of the threads of Lady Mary, Hervey, and Walpole picked up and cared for by the most diligent of diarists, Mary Delany. She was born on May 14th, 1700, at Coulston in Wilts (the daughter of Colonel Bernard Granville), and was brought up by her

¹ Walpole's moral stature is one of the few points upon which Macaulay and Croker seem to have been in substantial agreement: seldom wrong either of them, except in an unduly low estimate of one another.

aunt Valeria Lady Stanley, who had been a maid of honour to Queen Mary II. The Delany's recollections went back to Handel, Pope, Bolingbroke, and Swift, with whom she corresponded, and she was a playmate of Prior's "Kitty" and "Peggy" (Margaret Harley, Duchess of Portland). At seventeen she was married to a fat, gouty, snuffy, toping Cornish squire, sixty years old, very jealous, and a strong Jacobite, named Pendarves; a widow at twenty-four, she was surrounded by admirers, among them John Wesley, but in 1731 she went over to Ireland, stayed on St. Stephen's Green, came under the spell of Swift, who "learned her English," and in 1743 married Swift's old friend and future biographer, Dr. Delany. Her letters and diary abound in vivacious details of the social life of the eighteenth century. "Dear, delicious Mrs. Delany," the favourite of all, the most consummate of gossips, the most feminine of diarists, died in the odour of St. James's on April 15th, 1788. Her correspondence, which takes the form of a journalised tableau of the whole of her long life, was collected and edited by her great-niece Lady Llanover; the selection was made in 1856, the notes verified at the British Museum in 1857, and the whole issued in six bulky volumes with an index in 1861 and 1862.

For a picture of the Beau Monde from the time that "dear Mrs. Delany" left it we can refer the memoir-reader to the congenial pages of Miss Mary Berry, the friend of Horace Walpole, who was born three years after George III.'s accession, and lived to be introduced to Queen Victoria. She edited the letters of Madame du Deffand to Walpole in 1810, wrote a Life of Rachel Lady Russell, and a rather ambitious *Comparative View of Social Life in England and France from 1660* (1828). Her last effort was even more ambitious: it was to rescue the memory of her old friend, "Horace de Orford," who had always shown her his best side, from the giant grasp of an unfriendly Edinburgh Reviewer, one Macaulay. She died in November, 1852, a few months after her younger sister Agnes, and was buried at Petersham. Her journals and correspondence were edited in three large volumes by Lady Theresa Lewis in 1865.

Akin to these, both in age and stratification, are the letters, memorials, and other deposits of a large host of minor diarists, among them Mrs. Thrale, the Twinings, and Mrs. Trench. Mrs. Thrale's *Anecdotes of the late Dr. Johnson*, 1764-84, written in Italy after her marriage to Piozzi, and printed in 1786, can hardly die while curiosity as to Johnson lives, coloured though they are by the desire to defend her own conduct. Melusina Trench, a granddaughter of the Richard Chevenix whom Chesterfield made Bishop of Waterford in spite of the opposition of George II., left behind her some graceful and refined letters and journals, excerpted for publication as *Remains of Mrs. Richard Trench* in 1862. She and her husband were detained by Napoleon (1803-7), and she gives a very interesting account of personalities in Paris, also of Nelson and Lady Hamilton. A good judge, Edward Fitzgerald, greatly admired her letters for their "natural taste and good breeding." "One is sorry for the account of Lord Nelson, but we cannot doubt it." *The Twining Letters*, first published in 1882, are remarkable chiefly for the excellent critical taste, prevision, and discernment which they display. They were written by a scholarly clergyman, Thomas Twining, who died at Colchester in 1804, and are mainly concerned with the 'eighties of the eighteenth century.

The reach of Horace Walpole as a memoirist is equalled, if it be not surpassed, by that of Fanny Burney, whose diary extends for a good diamond jubilee of years since, a girl of seventeen, she first began in 1768-9 to scribble the impressions of the celebrities who thronged her father's house in Leicester Square. At twenty-six she brought out her first novel, *Evelina* (1778), the first great popular success since Sterne.¹ "Fannikin" herself now became a celebrity, and began to keep a diary on a large scale. The interest of this work is largely concentrated on the delightful picture which the little Burney gives of the softer side of "Ursa Major" (Dr. Johnson), to whom she was introduced in August, 1778, at the Streatham house of Mrs. Thrale, a lady twelve years her senior, for whom her enthusiasm was great. They had a common ground of self-admiration. No lady

¹ Macaulay, with a charming old-fashioned gallantry to the fair sex, was indignant to the point of ferocity with Croker for his insinuation (not *entirely* without ground) that the extraordinary success of *Evelina* was due in large measure to the "strange misrepresentation" that the author was ten years younger than she really was. But the peculiar feature about our prudish little Fanny was that she never really grew up at all!

author has ever, perhaps, been in greater danger of being spoiled by flattery than was Fanny Burney. At their third meeting Johnson felt himself in such spirits that he kissed her hand and called her a tartar, a toad, and a sly rogue. Her account of Johnson's last illness and of how she waited on his staircase for hours on the remote chance of being admitted to his bedside, is among the most touching and unaffected passages in this kind of writing anywhere to be found. After losing Dr. Johnson, who was to some extent her sponsor in the literary world, Fanny Burney acquired the friendship of "dear Mrs. Delany," whose continuator she was in a special sense to become. George III. and Queen Charlotte were frequent visitors at Mrs. Delany's house in Windsor, and nothing could well exceed the vivacity of Fanny's description of her first introduction to these august personages. In June, 1786, the Queen offered her a post as second keeper of the robes (£200 a year) under a rough-tongued and irascible Frau Schwellenberg—a post for which there were multitudes of eager aristocratic competitors. A stranger in aristocratic circles, and quite unhabituated to the flunkeyism propagated by a court, the little Burney was ill-advised enough (mainly by her father) to accept. It was going from the parlour to the school-room, or, perhaps more exactly, the servants' hall. After the flattery and incense that had surrounded the creator of Evelina and Cecilia, it was a painful contrast indeed. But the extent of posterity's loss in consequence of her being immured at Windsor has been exaggerated. Her best work in fiction was already done. Moreover, we gain in her diary an incomparable picture of the semi-monastic ritual and prison discipline to which she was subjected, also of Warren Hastings's trial and of the King's illness in 1789. It is a significant fact that after she leaves the court her diary¹ falls off in interest.

An amusing continuator of the historical memoirs of Hervey and Walpole may be found in Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall (1751—1831), a political underling, who had been in India, travelled a good deal in Germany, Northern Europe, and Italy on semi-political missions, wrote with a very facile pen, and sat in Parlia-

ment from 1780 to 1794. He was a great busybody, pushed himself in everywhere, and had a passion for notoriety equal to that of Boswell. When his *Historical Memoirs* appeared in 1815, Croker was at great pains to slash its inaccuracies in the pages of *The Quarterly*, and stepped out of the arena looking about him for congratulations with the air of a man conscious of having done a service to society, as if he had killed a mad dog. *The Edinburgh* and *The British Critic* followed suit. It is true that Wraxall had made some unjustifiable insinuations, and, with the true spirit of the incorrigible busybody and gossip, he seemed more amused than anything else at the mischief he had done (like a monkey grinning and chattering over the havoc which he has been committing in a china closet), though he had to pay £500 for a libel against Count Woronzow. Wraxall's descriptions of George III., Lord North, and the Gordon riots of 1780 are all most vivid, and the fine line which divides his inaccuracies from those of the other memoir-writers, though it may have been plain to Croker, is much less perceptible at the present day. Similar faults were found with the *Posthumous Memoirs*, which came out in 1836, five years after the author's death; but the faults, if proved, have not impaired the popularity of these fluent and entertaining volumes. Wraxall was, to some extent, the chartered buffoon of the higher political circles, round the periphery of which he had managed to scramble. George Selwyn spoke of him as "that rascal," and the *Rolliad* wits named him "the travelling tutor to the House of Commons." Yet as a gossip he derived certain advantages from these defects, and it is doubtful whether too much has not been made of Macaulay's gibes about the "Mendacium Wraxallianum."

Of the minor literary memoir-writers of the century represented by Mrs. Pilkington, Richard Glover, and William Hayley, the most interesting perhaps was Richard Cumberland (1732—1811), great-grandson of the learned Richard Cumberland, Bishop of Peterborough, author of *De legibus Naturæ* (1672), and one of the pioneers of utilitarianism in ethics. In letters Cumberland was emphatically an amateur—

¹ The *Diary and Letters* were issued in seven volumes, 1842-6, and a prelude in the shape of an Early Diary (1768-78), ed. Annie Raine Ellis, in 1890; a new edition by Dobson with fine plates, 1905. A serviceable abridgment of the *Diary* into three compact volumes was issued by Vizetelly & Co. (ed. W. C. Ward) in 1890, prefaced by Macaulay's *Essay* on Madame D'Arblay.

thin-skinned, jealous, abnormally whimsical, and conceited. He declined to laugh at *The School for Scandal*, which Sheridan said was unfair, for he had laughed heartily at "Cumby's" tragedy; and he was famously caricatured as Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic*. His novels, *Arundel* (1789) and *Henry* (1795), nominally in imitation of Fielding, are quite deservedly forgotten. His successful comedies, *The Brothers* (1769) and *The West Indian*, owed most of their success to Garrick. His abilities were good, but were immensely over-rated by himself—perhaps also by one or two friends, Garrick and Goldsmith among them. Vague, casual, and egotistical as they are, Cumberland's

Memoirs, published in two volumes in 1807, form his best title to remembrance. In these he tells us all about his political disappointments, and gives us a few disjointed and ill-remembered, yet fascinating, glimpses of the eminent men he had mixed with as a boy at Bentley's Lodge at Cambridge, and later at the British Coffee-house and the Literary Club. His *Anecdotes of Eminent Painters in Spain* (2 vols., 1782) deserves remembrance as the first English book to call attention to the glories of the Spanish school. In all his writing he is much addicted to verbiage, and he was best, in all probability, like Walpole, as a raconteur.

AMONG minor autobiographies, if only on account of its curiosity, a short space may be spared for the *Memoirs* issued in 1764, and attributed to George Psalmanazar, one of the most extraordinary of literary adventurers, charlatans, or cheats even in the century of Casanova, Cagliostro, and Barry Lyndon. Reputed a Gascon by origin, Psalmanazar is first heard of in the Rhine country in the reign of our William III., when, as one of the many subterfuges of a professional beggar, he hit on the idea of posing as a Japanese. Never having been east of Rome or Frankfurt he had to invent his "native" speech, diet, religion, and manners to suit the credulity of his clients. At one time he was a waiter in a coffee-house, and at another was reduced to take service in a regiment employed by the Elector of Cologne. Finally his religion and philology began to attract a little notice, even among persons of quality. The English garrison in the Low Countries during 1702 interested themselves in him. An army chaplain, who had an axe of his own to grind, transmuted him into a Formosan, baptised him, and forwarded his story greatly embellished to Dr. Compton, Bishop of London. Abuse of Jesuits at that time covered a host of infirmities, and in 1703 Psalmanazar landed at Harwich as an interesting victim of Jesuit malice in the Far East. He promptly drew up a Formosan catechism, made a butt of Dr. Burnet, and deceived the rest of the bishops with a running rein. He chattered gibberish with assurance, met rich patrons affably, and was sent at their expense to Oxford, where it was hoped that he might read Formosan with aspiring Orientalists. He even bragged of his cannibalistic feats, though he conceded that the man-eating habit was "a little unmannerly." Three years elapsed before he was found out and relegated to Grub Street, where Smollett, who knew those purlieus better than any other man, tells us that after fifty years' drudgery he was just paid enough by the booksellers to keep him off the parish. In a tavern in Old Street, Dr. Johnson sought him out and found in him qualities which led him to venerate the aged Psalmanazar as a saint. So greatly did Johnson venerate that he never contradicted him, and so delicately did he regard his feelings that he would not so much as mention China to him. The poor old Formosan died at Clerkenwell, very penitent for his imposture, in May, 1763. (For the best account see Birkbeck Hill's *Boswell*, vol. iii. App. A.)

As a supplement to the gossip, historical memoirs of Walpole and Wraxall, it might not be amiss to include in this place the recently selected *Creevey Papers*. Thomas Creevey (1768—1838), son of a Liverpool merchant, a man without birth or wealth or station, was called to the Bar, held one of the Norfolk pocket boroughs, and fluttered about among the left of the Radical opposition during the forty years or more of its starved and parched opposition to Pitt and his successors. Possessing nothing but his clothes, this pliant and accommodating Creevey mounted easily into the highest circles of the monde of that day, speaking his little mind without fear and restraint—a pure partisan, the frank mouthpiece of a faction, the secret counsels and calculations of which are seen often here in their most odious form. To Tom Creevey such men as Canning, Eldon, and Wellington were the greatest wretches unhung. A recipient of almost endless Whig hospitality down to 1832, when he set up a roof-tree of his own on the strength of a sinecure from the Reform Government, "Old Creevey," who had become a regular "Old Wigsby" to his friends, died in some obscurity in January, 1838. His papers, correspondence, and diaries were bought originally from the cheerful old reprobate's mistress and published first in 1903—a new one-volume edition with a greatly improved memoir in 1905. As a picture of politics and society from 1800 to 1838, in the days when all men had nicknames, such as Punch Greville, Poodle Byng, Bobus Smith, and Cheerful Charlie, and revealed their motives and designs with an almost Peysian frankness and smiling, unashamed loquacity, *The Creevey Papers* come very nearly, if not quite, up to the eighteenth-century standard, preparing the way for the great nineteenth-century diarists, Greville and Grant Duff.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORIANS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

"Succeeding scholars have read his history and pronounced it good. It is likewise finished."—BIRRELL, *Res Judicatæ*.

"I have always (wrote Gibbon) valued far above the external gifts of rank and fortune, two qualities for which I stand indebted to the indulgence of Nature, a strong and constant passion for Letters, and a propensity to view and enjoy every object in the most favourable light.' Could the art of happiness be condensed into fewer words?"—PAUL, *Men and Letters*.

Gibbon—Hume—Robertson—Hearne—Minor historians—Blackstone.

THE *Study and Use of History* was triumphantly vindicated by Lord Bolingbroke in his famous *Letters* on that subject dating from 1735, in which he claimed (after Diogenes Laertius) that History was Philosophy teaching by examples. Bolingbroke exhibited the same contempt for historical archivists and researchers that Pope showed towards poetical commentators and critics, but he was earnest in his desire to show the practical utility of a knowledge of modern history, and the excellent ethical influence of a study which emancipates the mind from narrowing influences and ennobles it by a wide understanding of mankind. Nevertheless, it was not until a quarter-century had passed and Clarendon and Burnet had become old masters that a really great school of modern English historians sprang up with the triumvirate represented by Gibbon, Hume, and Robertson.

The greatest of all our historians, Edward Gibbon, was born at Putney on April 27th, 1737, being the great-grandson of a Leadenhall Street linendraper, whose son made a large fortune by speculation in the reign of George I. His father was a member of White's Club, "who silently precipitated large sums of money into the bottomless pit" which that institution provided for the chastening of spendthrifts. From nine to eleven he was at the ancient classical school at Kingston-on-Thames, where, "at the expense of many tears and some blood," he purchased a knowledge of Latin syntax. His natural bent as a child was apparently

to mathematical studies. Between 1749 and 1750, "though still interrupted by danger and debility," he painfully climbed into the third form at Westminster School. He agrees with Cowper in describing the school of his day as "a cavern of fear and sorrow." Leaving Westminster in 1750, he spent some three years in desultory reading, arriving at Oxford "with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." "The dynasties of Egypt and Assyria," he explains, had been his top and cricket ball. He spent fourteen months at Magdalen College, Oxford, months "the most idle and unprofitable in my whole life."

Gibbon devoted a large portion of his time to rambling through the mazes of theological controversy. The perusal of Bossuet's *Catholic Doctrine and Protestant Variations* achieved his conversion to Popery. The consequence of this conversion, which he reported in a pompously self-important letter to his father, was his removal from Oxford and his banishment to Lausanne (1753). A meagre table, a narrow allowance, the deprivation of a man-servant, and an open fire had their due influence with the ex-fellow-commoner of Magdalen. He was soon reading Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales* in place of Bossuet; both writers contributed in an important measure to the formation of his prose style.

Gibbon was lucky in the Protestant pastor to whom the charge of his studies was entrusted.

M. Pavilliard was one of those austere Huguenot ministers of broad views and coral-insect kind of industry of whom the early eighteenth century saw so many examples. Himself a born student, Gibbon soon adapted himself to the methodical ways of his tutor. "Such as I am," he says, "in genius, in learning, or in manners, I owe my creation to Lausanne. It was in that school that the statue was discovered in the block of marble; and my own religious folly and my father's blind resolution produced the effects of the most deliberate wisdom." From this time he began habitually to speak French. Luard informs us that he spoke with a marvellous correctness, though his pronunciation was affected; he talked in a falsetto tone, and always "like a book." It was Sainte-Beuve's opinion that his English idiom suffered somewhat from his early familiarity with French. In 1758 he returned to England, and composed in French a somewhat stiff and formal *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature*.

His complete Frenchification was prevented by an accidental circumstance—the embodiment of the Southampton Militia. Gibbon and his father were committed to take up commands without realising very precisely what their obligations would be. The result was that for three years (1759-62) Gibbon led the life of an officer in a marching regiment. He was captain of the grenadier company, a post in which one is constrained to reflect that he must have cut a droll figure. At any rate, he put aside learning¹ and mingled with his fellow-countrymen. "With my foreign education and reserved temper," he says, "I might have remained a stranger in my own country"; as it was, he was "proud" to be "an Englishman and a soldier." He had earned, he tells us, the right to talk about the Roman legions, and when he returned to Lausanne he astonished his sedate friends. After the militia was disbanded, at the close of 1762, he started for the Continent, staying some months at Paris and at Lausanne, and proceeding to Florence, Rome, and Naples. He prepared himself for these visits by a systematic course of topographical study. "It was at Rome," he writes, in an ever-memorable passage, "on the 15th October, 1766, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing

vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

Nine or ten years elapsed before the idea was definitely adopted, the important event of this period being the formation of Gibbon's library. He had taken charge of his father's books upon his return to England in April, 1758, and the purchase for twenty guineas of the *Memoirs of the Society of Inscriptions of Paris* marks an important epoch. It was to form the nucleus of the instrument of his life's work—his select library. Within its walls he continued all his life to make learned discoveries, and laid the foundations of knowledge upon what he calls "a modest and learned ignorance." The conception and the plan alone of such a work as *The Decline and Fall* is wonderful. The daring occupation of a summit from which Christianity, Mohammedanism, Roman law, the irruptions of the different hordes of barbarians, and the politics of the Persian Empire might all be regarded as parts of one whole, is in itself a marvellous feat of that high form of imagination which is indispensable to historians and authors of scientific discoveries as much as to poets and painters. Gibbon's *History* is a kind of historical Mount Everest; it is interesting, however, to observe the lesser peaks which Gibbon scanned and thought of scaling before he resolved to risk the greater ascent. The first subject that attracted him was the expedition of Charles VIII. into Italy, and for this he read Comines, and wrote some preliminary dissertations. Successive ideas were the Third Crusade, the Barons' War, the Black Prince, and Sir Walter Raleigh. The last subject was long dallied with before he came to the conclusion that he must seek a theme at once safer and more extensive.

Gibbon's first English publication was *Critical Observations on the Sixth Book of the Æneid* (1770), an anonymous attack upon the "Eleusinian theory" of Warburton. His thoughts now at length became fixed upon Latin literature, and from Tacitus, Pliny, and Juvenal he "plunged into the ocean of Augustan history," and investigated with pen almost always in hand the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus. "The subsidiary rays of medals and inscriptions of geography and chronology were thrown on their

¹ His reading while he was in the militia was confined mainly to Homer, Polybius, Cæsar, Arrian, and Strabo.

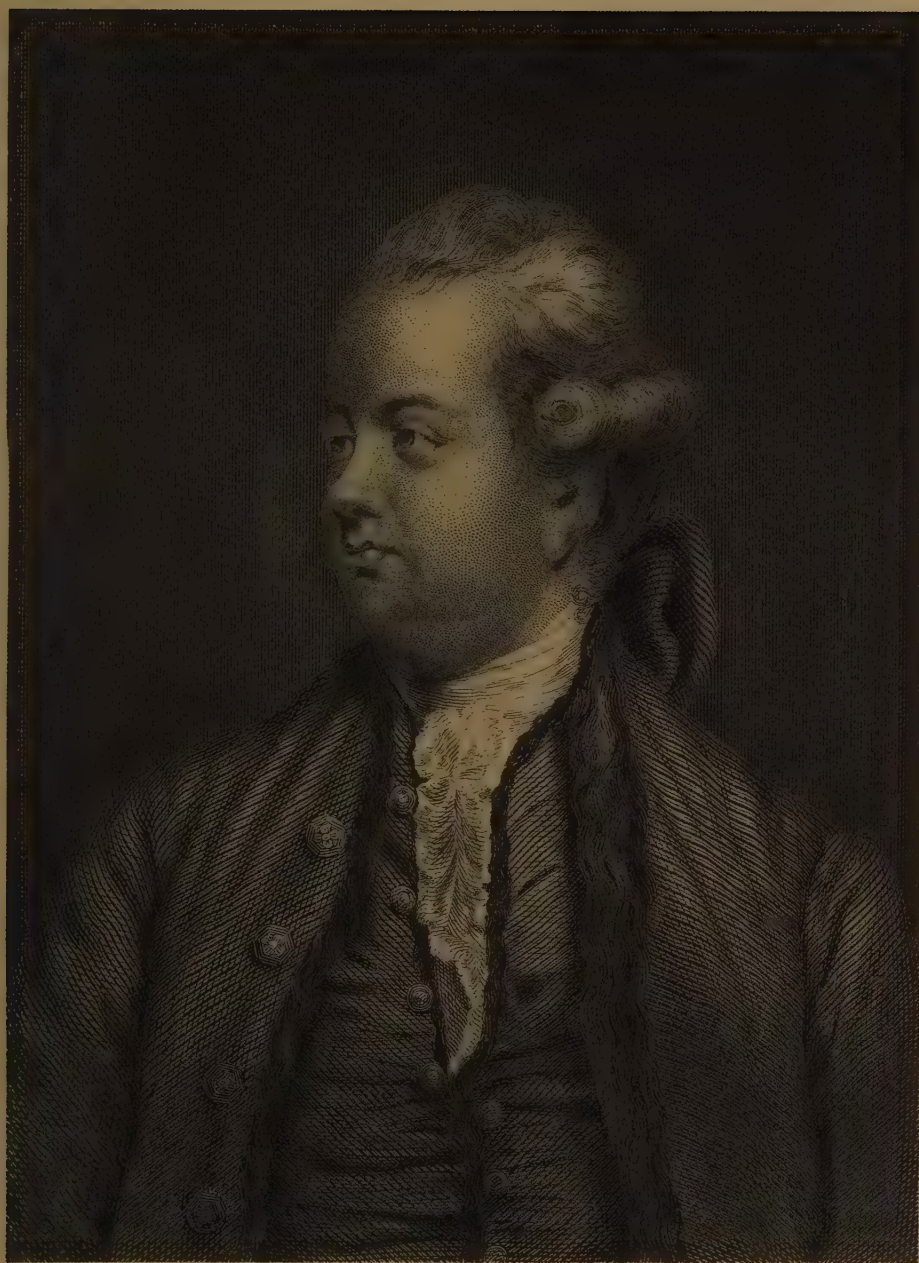
proper objects, and I applied the collections of Tillemont—inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius—to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information." These preliminary studies were interrupted by the illness and death of his father in November, 1770, and it was not until the end of 1772 that he was able to disentangle the estate.

Gibbon now settled in London, aged thirty-five, independent, and free to concentrate his accumulated knowledge and his consummate literary judgment upon the great work of his life. His wit caused him to be courted. Nervous as he was of being left alone with Johnson, he joined the Club in 1774; he also was seen at Boodle's, and obtained a pocket borough, through the interest of a cousin, at Liskeard; but he was merely a vote, not a voice, in the House of Commons, which he frequented chiefly in order to obtain the passport to a good sinecure (duly obtained in 1779, salary £750). In 1776 was published the first volume of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which met with general applause. He was specially gratified by the praise of Hume and Robertson, who seemed to offer him a place which he would never "presume" to claim, as one of the triumvirate of British historians. Vols ii. and iii. appeared in 1781. Two years later he removed to Lausanne to finish his history undisturbed and at leisure, and the three remaining volumes were the work of just under four years. "It was on the day, or rather night, of June 27th, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen I took several turns in a *berceau* or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame; but my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken my everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my

History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." Few passages in English prose are more justly celebrated than this, which exhibits alike the enthusiasm of literary inspiration and the sobering pathos of human achievement. Gibbon planned some further historical works, but executed none. In the summer of 1793 he returned to England to be with his friend, Lord Sheffield. His career was drawing to a close. "Earthly dignity has its limits, even in an historian." Symptoms of dropsy began to appear, and he died at Sheffield Place, on the road between East Grinstead and Lewes, on January 16th, 1794. His portrait by Sir Joshua is at Sheffield Place, and his remains in the Sheffield mausoleum in the neighbouring church of Fletching.¹

At various periods of his life, probably between 1788 and 1793, he had been occupied with the composition of an account of his own life and writings. He had written out a large portion of this autobiography no less than seven times, approaching the subject-matter each time from a slightly different point of view; and there is little doubt that he intended at some time to combine the different versions into one connected whole. His sudden death threw this task upon Lord Sheffield and his daughter, Maria Josepha Holroyd, who performed their task with diligence and care. At the same time they cut out a good many passages where Gibbon's candour got the better of his sense of decorum, thus stultifying the comic flourish about "Truth, naked, unblushing Truth," with which the *Memoirs*, as published in 1796, are prefaced. Gibbon's *Memoirs* are a valuable addition to our literature, which is not rich in autobiographical works of the kind. The Lives of Lord Herbert, Evelyn, and Clarendon hardly come into the same category; those of Holcroft and Gifford, Hume, Horner, and Mackintosh, though all interesting in their way, are not comparable in importance. The *Apologia* of Newman and the *Memoirs* of Mark Pattison are nearer to the work of Gibbon in their endeavour to depict the influences combining to produce "life-work." The nearest approach to it, however, by far, is the wonderful *Autobiography* of Herbert Spencer, between whose philosophic self-complacency and self-centred foibles and those of the great historian a remarkable affinity may be discerned.

¹ Gibbon had always been strangely indifferent to his own health and despised such alternatives as fresh air and exercise. At Sheffield Place they once removed his hat for over a week: he never missed it.



From the Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Edward Gibbon

Defects inseparable from a certain lack of imagination and from an extravagant cult of self are inherent both in the man and in his literary manner. Gibbon's style, in short, like himself, was pompous, formal, and obese, haunted by a species of old-fashioned academic verbosity and an inveterate tendency to grandiloquent periphrasis. The regularity of the cadence becomes singularly monotonous. Few styles lend themselves more easily to parody; it has, indeed, often been parodied, and many of the parodies are excellent. Yet the style of Gibbon, with certain obvious faults, was marvellously adapted to the historian's faculties and to the special effects which he sought to produce. For the purpose of antithesis, for the constant balancing of considerations, for the critical reservations so necessary to the historiographer and archæologist, and for the cynical innuendoes which are the salt of the *History*, the style of Gibbon is unsurpassed; and as the reader progresses with the work, he is more and more impressed by the long roll of the sentences, in which the conclusions of learning are enforced with all the arts of oratorical declamation. It may be that Gibbon sometimes draws out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument; but the rapidity of treatment increases very markedly as the work progresses. Thus, no less than one-half of the history is concerned with the events of 378 years, while those of 977 years are compressed into the remaining half.

The pre-eminent greatness of Gibbon's *History* is due, in the main, to three distinct causes. In the first place, to his conception of history as a spacious panorama in which a series of tableaux are made to pass before the reader's eye. In spite of theorists, Gibbon's conception remains, and will remain, in agreement with that of the vast mass of mankind. The success of *The Decline and Fall* is due, in the second place, to its erudition; it is one of the few great books to retain a literary reputation upon such a footing. And Gibbon retained to the last his general attitude of scepticism—the third great bulwark of the undying fame of his work. He was a much more profound sceptic than Voltaire, who was rather like Isaac Vossius in that you might easily persuade

him of even an improbable thing, if only it were not in the Bible.¹ The distrust of zeal, the conviction that enthusiasm is inconsistent with intellectual balance, was ingrained in Gibbon's mental constitution, and as time went on it was confirmed by study and experience. His cynicism supplied the antipathy which he infused when he mixed his most effective colours; and with this cynicism went an invaluable placidity of temperament. This cynical placidity was the historian's safeguard against the passion, the bigotry, the spiritual anxiety and allied distempers by which many historical works, in other respects great, have been so woefully disfigured.

In brief, then, the greatness of Gibbon was due to a combination (an almost unique one) of good sense, sceptical erudition, and exceptionally favourable external circumstances. The importance of the last condition Gibbon himself would have been the last to undervalue. His book remains the one English historical work which is reprinted and reissued, with commentaries and notes, as if it were an original, not a secondary authority; and it seems likely to outlive the *History* of a probably much greater man, Macaulay.

David Hume (1711–1776), the younger son of John Home, or Hume, laird of Ninewells, in Berwickshire, was born in Edinburgh in April, 1711. He was brought up as a child in the old house at Ninewells, but returned at eleven to "Edinburgh College." He showed little inclination either for law or commerce, and at twenty-three, after his father's death, he went to France to economise and indulge in solitary, monotonous literary contemplation. The result was, in 1739, his famous anonymous *Treatise on Human Nature*, which contains the whole of his philosophy in germ, and reveals the freshness of a young mind grappling with and developing to its full extent the idealism of Berkeley and the empiricism of Locke. The book, however, raised hardly a ripple of comment, and it was not until the appearance of his *Moral and Political Essays* in 1741–2 that Hume obtained any kind of literary recognition. He obtained a post as governor of an erratic noble, exchanged for the more congenial one of secretary to General St. Clair, travelled, saw something

¹ To Voltaire and St. John his thought owed much. Steeped in their writings, he regarded Christianity as an exploded superstition which no man of intelligence would profess to believe unless handsomely paid for doing so. It is noteworthy that Gibbon employed no amanuensis, and that he consulted with no one in any portion of his work.

of court life and warfare, and began thriftily to accumulate money. The most important and original of his works in exposition of his "utilitarian theory" was the *Inquiry into the Principles of Morals* of 1751. His outspoken hostility to the miraculous prevented his getting the comfortable chair and fixed salary which he coveted in Edinburgh. He obtained, however, with some difficulty, the post of librarian at the Advocates' Library. The command of books impelled him to be the historian of the English, a race which he despised. This labour completed, he revisited France in the capacity of secretary to Lord Hertford, and was enthusiastically welcomed in French salons as an atheist, though he outraged Helvétius by denying the soft impeachment and stating that he had never seen an atheist. Buckle, years afterwards, said he had only known one, and that one a Cabinet minister. He became (in spite of Rousseau's frenzy of bitterness against him for befriending him) the most good-humoured, fat, and self-complacent of deists. He was the hero of supper-tables and tavern-clubs in the most exclusive Edinburgh society, and was ready (the old pagan) to believe anything except the Bible. He frequently sat under his old friend Robertson in the Greyfriars Church, and always upheld the old-fashioned claret against the new-fangled port. In his most intimate moments he spoke broad Scots, and the literary forms of English were always a burden to his back and a snare to his feet. It was on August 25th, 1776, that his friends, notably Adam Smith, were summoned to see how a "sceptic" could die, and Edinburgh mourned the loss of one of its kindest, drollest, shrewdest, and blindest citizens. Hume gives us, with his own pen, a brief account of the conception of his famous *History*.

Hume's *History of England*, the first volume of which appeared in 1754, consists rather of a series of brilliant illustrations of an *à priori* theory than of a serious inquiry into facts, upon which alone any inductive process can properly be based. Moved by an intense disgust at the party manœuvres, misnamed politics, of his own time, as exemplified by the narrow chicanery of the dominant Whig party, Hume was disposed to exalt the government of the Stuart kings, from whose tyranny the Whigs were never tired of priding themselves that they had emancipated the country. He went so far as to assert that in all history it would

be difficult to find a reign more unspotted and unblemished than that of James I. The paradox that the revolution of 1688, so much belauded by Whig writers, was in reality a retrograde step, pleased Hume more as he proceeded; and, in his last revision of his work, he assiduously softened or expunged "many villainous, seditious Whig strokes which had crept into it," being convinced that he had not done enough to canonise Laud or to whitewash Strafford. Having in his second volume (1766) carried the work from 1649 to 1688, he determined, as an answer to his numerous critics, to work backwards, and show from a survey of the Tudor period that his Tory views were based upon a study of the English constitution as then settled. In 1759 this portion of the work appeared, and in 1761 *The History of England* was completed by the history of the pre-Tudor periods; this last part was deformed by Hume's carelessness and ignorance, and is unworthy of the portions relating to Tudor and Stuart times. These show Hume as a thorough partisan of strong government, and as a very moderate lover of the boasted "liberty" for which he deemed that so rude a beast as an Englishman was unfitted; yet they place his work far above the narrow sectarian bigotry of the memoir-writers, or the unmitigated dulness of the chronological compilers who had hitherto done duty as historians. In the literature of history Hume's book must, as in many respects a pioneer work, always retain a position; while in the history of literature, also, his book has a distinct place. It was the first attempt at a really comprehensive and thoughtful treatment of historic fact, the first to introduce the social and literary aspects of a nation's life in due subordination to its civil and political history, and the first large piece of historical writing in England to be graced with the polish and at the same time with the vivacity of a modern style.

With the *History* of Hume is commonly associated the very inferior compilation of the novelist Tobias Smollett. Smollett's *History* was primarily a bookseller's venture designed to take the wind out of the sails of Hume. Commencing in 1756, Smollett hurried through eighteen centuries before the close of that year, and his *History*, from Julius Cæsar to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, appeared in four quarto volumes during 1757-8. Hume

wrote ironically of his rival as seated on the historical summit of Parnassus, and complained bitterly of the extraordinary run upon the new *History of England*. Smollett states with pride that he consulted more than three hundred books in compiling the work, which was re-issued during 1758-9 in sixpenny parts, and had an enormous sale. A continuation (1763) brought Smollett's work down to 1760, and the portion of the combined work from 1688 to 1760 was subsequently modified and slightly abbreviated in order to form a continuation to Hume. Smollett had an *atelier* of satellite scribes, something after the manner of Alexander Dumas père; but Smollett managed to infuse into the work a characteristic vigour of style which is the one merit that it possesses.

William Robertson, born in a Midlothian manse on September 19th, 1721, rivalled or surpassed his two fellow-countrymen in historical fame, and came level with them also as a writer of English prose—an art which had hitherto never flourished in Scotland. In 1759, after six years' labour, Robertson produced his first large work, *The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Mary and James VI. down to 1603*. Unlike Hume's, Robertson's style was Johnsonian, and the sonorous correctness of his periods created an extraordinary impression in England. People asked, as of Macaulay, "Where did he get that style?" in which such an excellent judge as Chesterfield professed to trace the eloquence of Livy. But with these Livian and declamatory qualities went a lack of idiomatic vigour which is sensibly felt by the modern reader, lending to Robertson's pages a monotony that is absent

from those of Hume or Smollett. Gibbon frequently has a caustic phrase, short and sharp; but Robertson's sentences are almost invariably long, terribly antithetic, laboriously balanced.

The historian's next work, a *History of the Emperor Charles V.* (1769), in favour of which he had rejected plans for histories of England, of Greece, of Learning, of Leo X., is justly regarded as his masterpiece, and rendered his fame European. The introduction, forming a descriptive estimate of the "dark ages" (700—1100 A.D.), was one of the first successful attempts in England at historical generalisation on the basis of large accumulation of fact. Many of Robertson's conclusions are, of course, now quite obsolete (many of them were, indeed, ably traversed by Dr. S. R. Maitland); his data were necessarily very imperfect, as was also his sympathy with mediæval history, in respect to which he almost inevitably shared the Voltairean prejudices of Hume. Yet the suggestiveness of his method has greatly impressed and not infrequently inspired successive generations of historical students; and the intrepidity, combined with shrewdness, with which he grappled with the most thorny subjects, such as Frankish land tenures, seems to show that if he had, like Gibbon, been able to soak himself in continental erudition and to concentrate his whole attention upon historical work, he might have attained a position in the very highest rank of historians. Robertson's third work, the *History of America* (1777), did not tend to increase his reputation, but some of the episodes in it contain the best passages in point of style that came from his pen.

THE period subsequent to the recorded labours of Dugdale and Wood exhibited some very remarkable historical and legal antiquaries, mostly Oxford men, whose ant-like industry prepared foundations upon which all subsequent scholars have to a very large extent been content to build. Such were William Nicolson (1655—1727), Bishop of Carlisle, who accumulated a marvellous collection of MSS. and official documents, and who published his great *Historical Library*, providing a rapid view of the accumulated riches of our old chronicle literature, between 1696 and 1724; and Thomas Tanner (1674—1735), another Queen's College man, was author of two antiquarian compilations famous to all students, the first as the *Notitia Monastica* (1695), and the second, Tanner's immortal *Bibliotheca Britannica* (1748), an account of English authors from the earliest times down to Bacon, the result of forty years' research.

Edward Lhuyd (1660—1709), of Jesus, Oxford, did for Wales what Nicolson had attempted for the rest of the Britannia in his *Archæologia Britannica*. Thomas Rawlinson (1681—1725), the great collector of his time, the "Tom Folio" of *The Tatler*, supplied the historians of his time with materials much as Charles Cotton had done a century before him. White Kennett (1660—1728), of St. Edmund Hall, having studied philology from Somner and Hickes, became a great topographer and historical annotator, gave his name to a booksellers' *History of England*, and wrote the portion from 1660 to 1700, so severely traversed by Roger North. Kennett's impenitent Whiggism led to his being introduced as Judas Iscariot into the mural paintings of High Churchmen. As Georgian Bishop of Peterborough he was not called upon to submit to any severer form of martyrdom, but went on compiling contentedly down to the day of his death. Similar in kind, but more valuable, were the editions of Leland and of our older chronicles undertaken by that tireless "implicit transcriber" Thomas

Hearne (1678—1735), the great Oxford antiquary, son of a parish clerk, another alumnus of "Teddy" Hall, but, unlike Kennett, the most bigoted of Jacobites. Refusing the most tempting librarianships under a Brunswick dynasty, he lived and died a private person at Oxford, studying, collecting, and preserving antiquities to the end, in June, 1735. His *Diary* is a record of one of the most profound and narrow-minded antiquaries that England can boast.

Thomas Rymer (1641—1713), of Sidney Sussex, who wrote a narrow, almost childish silly, censure upon *Othello* and *Paradise Lost*, is better remembered as a historiographer, and editor of the famous compendium of British treaties known as *Rymer's Fœdera* (a syllabus of the seventeen folio volumes was compressed into three by Sir Thomas Hardy in 1869-85).

Thomas Madox (1666—1727), a man of truly formidable historical and legal erudition, collected rolls and charters, wrote on the *Firma Burgi* or Municipal Constitutions of Britain, and also compiled a most elaborate *History of the Exchequer of the Kings of England* (1711).

Of the minor historians and antiquarians of the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century a very short notice will suffice to indicate the general character and literary importance, which is relatively small. One of the most laborious, from the point of view of research, was Thomas Carte (1686—1754), a nonjuror and a Jacobite, whose laborious *Life of Ormonde* (1736) has preserved its author's reputation as a diligent researcher, better than his equally laborious *History of England* to 1654, which came out in four volumes between 1747 and 1755. Carte's investigations enabled him to expose many errors in the accredited Whig histories, such as those of White Kennett and the more impartial Rapin, though his zeal in affirming that his divinely conferred gift of healing the scrofula was still inherent in the Pretender alienated many of his subscribers. One of the most respected of historians of the early 'fifties was George Lyttelton (1709—1773), the Good Lord Lyttelton, whose *History of Henry II.* eventually appeared in 1767. To this work it would be unfair to deny the merit of protracted research; but this is about all that can well be said in its favour. It shows, says Walpole, how dull one may be if one but takes pains for seven-and-twenty years. The materials are so ill-arranged and the style so insufferably prolix that it has come to be regarded as the English parallel of the Italian *History of Guicciardini*, to which, rather than read it, the condemned criminal preferred to go the galleys. A very superior work was the detailed *History of the Military Transactions with the British Nation in Indostan from 1745* (1763 to 1778) of Robert Orme (1708—1801), the son of an army doctor in the East India Company's service, who was himself for some years Accountant-General in India. Orme was ignorant both of the languages and the classical literature of India, but the epical quality of his narrative (much of it the work of an eye-witness) gave his *History* a standard value down to the time of James Mill and Macaulay, who praised the *History* warmly. It was a favourite reading with Colonel Newcome, and was read with enthusiasm, as a boy, by Sir Walter Scott, who recurred to it in his last years in *The Surgeon's Daughter*. In 1777 appeared the *History of Philip II. of Spain*, by Robert Watson (1730—1781), a St. Andrews minister, professor, and imitator of Robertson, whose book was well esteemed in its day and praised by Horace Walpole, though it has since been quite superseded by Prescott.

John Campbell (1708—1775), who compiled untold volumes of a quasi-erudite character at the rate of two guineas a sheet, is chiefly associated with the ancient and modern *Universal History*, which was projected by the booksellers, in twenty-three enormous volumes, between 1736 and 1765. Campbell, under the nominal supervision of Smollett, was one of the directors of this voluminous work, for many years the laughing-stock of European scholars. Among the chief contributors and translators employed (most of whom were Scotsmen) may be mentioned Archibald Bower (1686—1766), a Dundee man, an ex-Jesuit, who wrote on ecclesiastical and papal history; William Guthrie (1708—1770), a reporter on *The Gentleman's Magazine*; George Sale (1697—1736), the Oriental scholar, a native of London, who devoted himself to Arabic studies, and published in 1734 his famous translation of the Koran, the first adequate rendering into any European language. Sale, who had also contributed to Boyle's *General Dictionary*, undertook a *Survey of Oriental History from the Flood*, and this was published three years after his death. Among his other collaborators on the *Universal History* were John Swinton, Captain Shelvocke, and George Psalmanazar (see p. 299). A collateral compiler, Robert Henry (1718—1790), in his once well-known *History of England* (1771-85) in six volumes, was one of the first to classify his work under such headings as Learning, Art, Manners, Religion, and so on, in preference to the continuous chronological arrangement. Of much more genuine interest to the scholar than any of these compilations are the antiquarian labours of those collectors of historical documents who based annals upon a study of original documents, or digested original materials, and manipulated them in such a manner as to render new facts and results readily available to the historian proper. Such labours are only indirectly, perhaps, of literary importance. But it was only upon such a substructure the Gothic or romantic revival (and the renewed interest in and the fairer appreciation of the Middle Ages, which supplies one of its chief stimuli) could possibly be reared. Among such works observe the *Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth* (1751) of Thomas Birch; the *Memorials and Letters of James I. and Charles I.* (in 1760 and 1766), and the *Annals of Scotland* (1776), of Sir David Dalrymple (1726—1792), known on the Scottish bench as Lord Hailes; the curious anti-Whig *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland* (1680-94), published in three volumes in 1771 by Sir John Dalrymple (1726—1810); the *Original Papers*, containing the Secret History of Great Britain (1666 to 1774), brought out by James Macpherson, of Ossian fame, in 1775; the *Biographical History of England* (1769) of James Granger (1723—1776), the famous print-collector and book-despoiler; the *Illustrations of British History* and still familiar *Portraits of Illustrious Personages* of Edmund Lodge (1756—1839); the *Regal and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of England* (1773)

of Joseph Strutt (1749—1802), author of the well-known volumes on the Dress, Sports, and Pastimes of the English People and of the antiquarian romance (*Queenhoo Hall*) which set Scott thinking of *Waverley*; the *Ecclesiastical History of England* (1757) of Ferdinando Warner (1703—1768); the *Historical and Critical Inquiry* (1759) of William Tytler (1711—1791), the discoverer of the *Kingis Quair*; and the *Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated* (1788) of John Whitaker (1735—1808), the last two works having both been provoked by the treatment accorded to Mary by Robertson in his *History of Scotland*, a book of great impartiality, which was also attacked as being much too favourable to the unfortunate Queen. The Scottish group would hardly be complete without mention of John Pinkerton (1758—1826), a collector of Scots songs, an early authority on medals, and author of a *History of Scotland under the Stuarts*; this was published in 1797, in which year Pinkerton also issued his *Iconographia Scotica*. A brief reference is also due to Jacob Bryant (1715—1804), the distinguished classical antiquary, a friend of Madame d'Arblay (Frances Burney), and one of the first collectors of Caxton, who wrote on Troy, and was the author of learned but much criticised *Observations and Inquiries relating to Ancient History* (1767). The valuable repository of antiquarian learning known as the *British Topography* of Dr. Richard Gough (1735—1809) appeared in 1768; planned when he was a youth at Cambridge, it contains a minute description of public records, maps, engravings, and printed materials available for the study of British antiquities. Gough and his friend John Nichols (1745—1826), the apprentice and finally the partner of the learned printer William Bowyer, were the two great bulwarks of the prosperous *Gentleman's Magazine*, which, started by Edward Cave in 1731, became the reigning oracle of the eighteenth century. In later days this genial old magazine was edited in turn by John Bowyer Nichols and John Gough Nichols. Nichols, still known as the editor of Swift and Hogarth, of the *Literary Anecdotes*, of *The Progresses of Elizabeth*, and the *History of Leicestershire*, was, perhaps, the most industrious bookman of his day. Gough's *Topography* was followed in 1786 by his great work on Sepulchral Monuments, and three years later by his noble edition of Camden's *Britannia*. Inferior to these books in scholarship was the *Antiquities of England and Wales*, brought out between 1773 and 1787 by Francis Grose (1731—1791), the son of a wealthy jeweller of Swiss origin, who dissipated his patrimony and spent the latter part of his life in rambling antiquarian researches. He also wrote on Etymology and Armour, was a fluent draughtsman, and published two volumes of *Casual Essays*, *The Grumbler*, and *The Olio*, of 1793.

Two writers upon our native institutions, although far inferior in erudition to scholars of a past age such as Selden and Madox, were fortunate in their generation, for the halo which had become attached to the English constitution since 1688 was never larger than at the period when abuses seemed likely to submerge it for good and all. *The Constitution of England* by the spendthrift Swiss emigré, John Louis De Lolme, first appeared in French in 1771 and then, four years later, was translated into excellent English. It flattered the national pride by making the English constitution appear as near perfection as a human contrivance in equilibrium can well be. The discussion about Wilkes and the rise of English radicalism also directed a good deal of attention in the way of De Lolme's *Essay*, which reached a fifth edition in 1807—the year of its author's death. He is said to have recanted his liberal views in his old age and to have taken service under Napoleon. Sir William Blackstone has acquired fame as a jurist out of all proportion to his talents. Born in Cheapside in 1723, he went to Pembroke College, Oxford, from Charterhouse at the age of fifteen, and as a young man had a good conceit of himself as a poet; he could not obtain practice in London, so he became Vinerian Professor of Law in Oxford, as others have done before and since. In 1761 he entered Parliament, and two years later became Solicitor-General, concluding his career in 1770 as a Justice of Common Pleas. The four volumes of his *Commentaries on the Law of England* were given to the world in 1765-9. Blackstone's style is clear, ornate, and graceful, his book a good "gentleman's law book," clear but not deep. His method is not scientific, and he was not comprehensive-minded enough to weigh the law from a legislator's point of view. His *Commentaries* were very severely handled by Bentham and by Austin and his school. But in the meantime they had established a place for themselves as a classic of English law. Their influence has been great, not merely in our island, but over two continents. For Blackstone was profoundly studied by Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, and the other fathers of the American constitution, and, from the vantage-ground thus gained, Blackstone has made his mark upon the institutions of Europe. All unconscious of this far-reaching destiny, he died at Wallingford on February 14th, 1780, *æt.* 56. Educationally "Blackstone" is still a great name, while his book is often referred to in the courts to this day as a standard of all but primary authority.

The best editions of Gibbon's *History* are those by Milman and Bury.* The *Memoirs* first issued by Lord Sheffield in 2 vols., 1827, have been re-edited by Milman, Murray, Birkbeck Hill,* and O. F. Emerson; while the *Letters* were edited by R. E. Prothero in 1896. See also J. Cotter Morison's *Gibbon*, P. Anton's *Masters in History*, Grant's *English Historians* (1906), and Seccombe's *Age of Johnson* (1898).

For Hume, J. Hill Burton's *Life and Correspondence of David Hume* and Dr. Birkbeck Hill's *Letters of Hume to Strachan* must be supplemented by Huxley's sketch* of Hume's philosophical position in the "English Men of Letters," and by James Orr's *David Hume and his Influence* (1903); see also *Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 1st, 1856; A. Schatz, *L'Œuvre économique de D. Hume* (1902); M. Tesseire, *Les Essais économiques de D. Hume* (1902). Both Hume and Robertson are well depicted in H. G. Graham's *Scottish Men of Letters of the Eighteenth Century*.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAVE OF THE POETS

"To a reader of Thomson's own generation *The Seasons* must have come as the revelation of a fresh world of beauty. Such passages as those which describe the first spring showers, the thunderstorm in summer, the trout fishing, the sheep washing, and the terrors of the winter night, were not only strange to the public of that day, but were new in English poetry,"—BEERS, *English Romanticism*.

"These divine truisms make me weep."—TENNYSON ON GRAY'S *Elegy*.

Poetic nonconformists—"Jemmy" Thomson—William Shenstone—Thomas Gray—William Collins—
The Wartons.

A GREAT defect of the Grand Siècle in France and of the Augustan Age in England was their lack of historical and antiquarian sentiment, and their insensibility to the idea of historic continuity. The age of Pope and Swift knew hardly anything about the great Elizabethan literature, and still less of the great writers before that epoch. The Augustans thought pretty well of themselves, and no doubt imagined that they knew practically everything worth knowing. We know that they were far from encyclopædic: the *Encyclopædia Britannica* was indeed still undreamt of. A smattering of everything was still unattainable to the connoisseurs of the early Georges, and they fastened upon Dryden, Pope, Boileau, and the classics as the models best worthy of their close and unremitting attention. The narrowing effect of this tendency cannot be gainsaid. At the same time both tendency and effect have been grossly exaggerated by the critics of the nineteenth century, whose foible has never been a profound knowledge of the eighteenth. The spell cast by Pope over the poetry of the mid-eighteenth century is freely admitted; but it is very easy to over-estimate and to generalise far too readily upon this basis. Slavish imitation is the badge of none but very second-rate poets. The cult of Pope was the established religion of taste, no doubt, but there were always non-conformists both active and numerous, whose ideal chapels dotted the land and multiplied almost as rapidly as the material chapels of the Methodists. Curiously enough the revolts

against formalism in religion and poetry broke out almost simultaneously. And the poetic revolt was much more versatile and many-sided than the religious. It is extraordinary, in fact, how, beginning with Thomson in 1726, the ideals of the Augustan Age were with scant ceremony to be put aside and reversed. Blank verse is seen beginning to supersede the heroic couplet, against which, by reason of its very perfection in Pope's hands, the poets of the rising generation felt that they must protect themselves at all hazards. Similarly, experiments, first playful, but very quickly more serious, were being made with the stanza of *The Faerie Queene*, and later on with the *Sonnet* form, the very name of which provoked in critics of the Johnsonian school the sort of disdain a Beethoven might feel for a toy symphony. With Shenstone and Philips and Percy in another direction the cultivation of the old ballad literature began. Gray stands for an awakened curiosity in Scandinavian and Icelandic poetry and antiquities. He also represents very well in England what Rousseau blazed abroad—the development of a new, passionate, and increasingly intimate love of wild external nature, partly as a reaction and a protest against the courtly and suburban elegances of Twickenham and Versailles.

To pretend, then, that the poetic heart of the eighteenth century was Popean to the core is nothing short of an extravagance. The tradition of Mr. Pope was cherished among versifiers throughout the century, no doubt, just as the poetic ideals of Scott and Macaulay are

cherished even to-day, and for similar reasons. The diction, too, which Dryden and Pope had transmitted and modified from Milton remained to most of the poets of the day an embarrassing source of wealth. But one need not regard the poetasters of the time and the recipes that they employed as the exclusive depositories of poetic tradition. There were a number of true poets in the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century to whom all credit is due as pioneers and precentors of the romantic movement under the depressing conditions to which innovators in poetry are commonly subject. They may strike us as rather a feeble band after the great romantics of Elizabethan days. Four of them were mentally deranged (Collins, Smart, Cowper, Blake), while Gray was a perfect hermit, and Shenstone and Thomson the most indolent of recluses. The most virile of the group, perhaps, was a boy who died at the age of seventeen. All of them were bachelors, with the single exception of Blake, and a more despondent group of artists, as a whole, it would not, perhaps, be easy to discover. Catacombs and cypresses were the forms of imagery that came to them most naturally. Elegies and Funeral Odes were the forms of expression in which they felt at home. Yet they strove as a whole to follow the gleam in poetry, to reinstate imagination upon its throne, and to substitute the singing voice for the rhetorical recitative of the heroic couplet. And their influence, weak and tortuous though its workings were, eventually permeated our literature between 1730 and 1798, when the *Lyrical Ballads* heralded the new movement. We trace the first stirrings of these new impulses in the lives and careers of Thomson, Shenstone, Gray, and Collins.

In July, 1692, Thomas Thomson, son of a gardener in the employment of Mr. Edmonston, of Ednam, was appointed minister to that parish in the north-eastern corner of pastoral Roxburgh. Fifteen months after his settlement in Ednam, this pious and devoted, if somewhat gloomy and superstitious, minister married Beatrix Trotter, the daughter of a neighbouring yeoman. Their fourth son, James, born at Ednam Manse, and baptised in the kirk there on September 15th, 1700, was destined to be the descriptive poet *par excellence* of the eighteenth century, and one of the most notable forerunners of the romantic movement in this country. At twelve

he went to school in a former chapel of the old Abbey at Jedburgh, and in 1715 proceeded to Edinburgh University. The boy had attracted some attention by his parts among the local gentry of Roxburghshire, and the somewhat freezing atmosphere of the class-rooms at Edinburgh chilled his young blood. His father would have overruled his objections to the ministry, but the good pastor had died in 1716. James, at twenty-five, decided upon trying his fortune in London, and there was no one to prevent him; through connections of his mother he got a footing as a tutor with the Hamiltons, Earls of Haddington, at East Barnet. While under their roof he began to combine some fragments of descriptive blank verse from a germ formed by a poem he had contributed to *The Edinburgh Miscellany* of 1720, grafted upon a MS. poem on Winter by his father's friend, Robert Riccaltoun. A bookseller was found to advance £3 upon it, and *Winter* was published in March, 1726. A second edition appeared in June, and *The Seasons*, as a complete whole, which he had not contemplated when he sat down to a blank verse "study" of a Scottish winter, grew out of its success. He proceeded with *Summer* as the antithesis of *Winter*. *Spring* followed in 1728, and the scheme was brought to a glorious conclusion with *Autumn* and the final Hymn in 1730. Between this date and 1746 he revised the poems perpetually, subtracting freely, but more often adding, so that the net increase in the number of lines in the complete poem amounted to well over a thousand. By 1730 Thomson had made a distinct reputation for himself, and there was a stampede to obtain seats for the production of his first tragedy, *Sophonisba*, which proved to be a feeble imitation of Otway. The poet's position was assured by a good patron. He travelled for two years, mainly in Italy, with Charles Talbot, son of the future Lord Chancellor, and three years later obtained from that dignitary a sinecure post (£300) as secretary of briefs. In 1736 we find him settled in a cottage with a pretty garden (in which he employed a Scots cousin) in Kew Foot Lane. Thence he used to walk to Pope's at Twickenham and Mallet's at Strand-on-the-Green. During this halcyon period he worked at his most-cherished poem, a huge epic on *Liberty* (five parts, 1734-6). Talbot died in 1737, but after a short period of anxiety, Thomson found

a new patron in George, first Lord Lyttelton. His second play, *Agamemnon*, brought him in a fair sum, and the Prince of Wales, on hearing that his finances were "in a poetical condition," granted him a pension of £100 a year. His best play, *Tancred and Sigismunda: A Tragedy* (in part translated into German by Lessing), was given at Drury Lane by Garrick on March 18th, 1745. In the meantime, during 1740, Thomson had contributed to a spectacular piece called *The Masque of Alfred*, first performed in the gardens at Cliefden House on August 1st, his noble ode known as *Rule, Britannia*, the music for which was composed by Dr. Arne. The famous ode echoes sentiment and phrases which had already done duty in Thomson's patriotic poems, *Britannia* (1729) and *Liberty*. In 1736 *The Gentleman's Magazine* had printed the first of several poems by Thomson "To Amanda." Eight years elapsed without impairing the bard's fidelity to this lady, Elizabeth, daughter of Captain Gilbert Young. But her relatives were opposed to the match—"he'll write ballads and you'll sing them," said they—and in 1744 the lady married Admiral Campbell. The disappointment preyed upon Thomson's spirits, and retarded the progress, already sluggish, which he made with his second important poem, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748). It was first conceived in the form of a few detached Spenserian stanzas in raillery of his own indolence, which he deemed to be well paralleled by that of his friends. The first stanzas answering to this conception are finely artistic, and in the drowsy effect which they suggest, Thomson shows himself a master of onomatopœic verse not unworthy of the creator of *The Lotus Eaters*. The singer of Morpheus was a sincere colourist, and he managed to throw over his canvas a romantic iridescence and atmosphere quite peculiarly Thomsonian. "There is a magic art in the de-

scription of the land of drowsyhead, with its listless climate always atween June and May, its stockdove's complaint amid the forest deep, its hillside woods of solemn pines, its gay castles in the summer clouds, and its murmur of the distant main." Unhappily the poet was not destined to revise his too-fragmentary and unequal poem. After a brisk walk, he caught a severe chill in a boat between the Mall, Hammersmith, and Kew Bridge. He died on August 27th, 1748, and was buried in Richmond Parish Church, aged not quite forty-eight. His requiem was sung by Shiels and Shenstone; and once again in the noble elegiac ode, "In yonder grave a druid lies," by William Collins, the lyrist of that twilight close upon the dawn which Thomson must always represent for us in nature poetry.¹

The Seasons may be regarded as inaugurating a new era in English poetry. Lady Winchelsea, John Philips, the author of *Cyder*, and John Dyer, whose *Grongar Hill* was published a few months before *Winter*, had pleaded, by their work, for a truthful and unaffected and, at the same time, a romantic treatment of nature in poetry; but the ideal of artificiality, by which English poetry was dominated under the influence of Cowley and Pope, was first effectively challenged by Thomson. It was he who transmitted the sentiment of nature not only to imitators like Savage, Armstrong, Somerville, Mickle, and Shenstone, but also to Gray and Cowper, and so indirectly to Wordsworth. Cowper, in particular, was interpenetrated with the spirit and feeling of *The Seasons*, and it is related in a pathetic passage how in the last glimmerings of cheerfulness before his final collapse, he walked in the moonlight in St. Neot's churchyard and "spoke earnestly of Thomson's *Seasons*, and the circumstances under which they were probably written." *The Seasons* itself falls short of being a masterpiece, owing to the strong alloy of poetic diction in

¹ Thomson was a good trencherman and a gay dog when a carouse was toward. His rhapsodies about innocency, his denunciation of luxury, and his praise of early rising and cold bathing sounded rather hollow to some of his contemporaries from the lips of a bard "more fat than bard beseems," who used to lie abed till noon, and who, as Savage told Johnson, was perhaps never in cold water in his life. Other tales are told of how he used to cut his books with the snuffers and devour the sunny halves of wall peaches with his hands in his pockets. He had a good cellar, had our worthy surveyor of the Leeward Islands, and he was a collector in a quiet way of prints and poetry. He would sit up all night humming poetry over to himself, striding about the room, sounding a fine rhythm, and occasionally, carried away by his emotion, sobbing vehemently. It is curious to think of him intoning his verse in broad Scots. The players could not contain themselves when he read over *Agamemnon* to them with his strong North British accent. The story is well-known of Dr. Burney finding the poet in bed two hours after noon, and asking him what was the matter, and Thomson's rejoinder, "Ecod, mon, but a had no mottive to rise." A Life is promised by Prof. G. C. Macaulay; the best we have is L. Morel's *James Thomson: Sa Vie et ses Œuvres*,* 1895.

the Popean sense; the very blank verse has been passed through the strainer of the heroic couplet. But it gave the signal for a revolution which was destined to renew European literature, and it maintained its reputation almost unimpaired until the final triumph of the romantic school in the nineteenth century. In the home of his birth Thomson's celebrity was supreme down to 1820, when it seemed quite suddenly to founder, supplanted by the cult of Burns.

Son of a small gentleman of Worcestershire, and favourite pupil of Sarah Lloyd, famous henceforward as *The Schoolmistress*, William Shenstone was born on November 13th, 1714. Going up to Oxford in 1732 he became one of the idle "singing-birds" of Pembroke. At Oxford he is said to have signalled his natural tastes by wearing his own hair instead of a wig. In 1745 he inherited a Shropshire farm, called the Leasowes, in the parish of Halesowen, and an annuity of some £300. He was of an indolent, retiring, and somewhat melancholy temperament; and, instead of pursuing a professional career, he settled down upon his property, and began to turn it into a *ferme ornée*. There he wooed the rustic Muse in elegy, ode, and pastoral ballad, sounding upon the vocal reed the beauties of simplicity and the vanity of ambition, and mingling with these strains complaints of Delia's cruelty and the shortness of his own purse, which hampered him seriously in his gardening designs. But landscape gardening was the preoccupation of his soul. There were fountains, urns and cisterns, vistles and rustic seats, and inscriptions in verse everywhere. Celebrities came from all parts of the country to banter the virtuoso, but to imitate his dripping fountain, his piping fawn, and his "ruinated priory." Like his contemporary John Byrom, Shenstone was a clever experimenter and innovator in verse. As he went hopping about his gravel walks, as Gray kindly put it, he composed a quantity of verse (poetry and consumption, as he said, are the most flattering of diseases), and if it was not very first-rate poetry, it was at any rate, as Fuseli said of Blake, "d—d good to steal from." In 1737, in the first version of *The Schoolmistress*, in a slender volume of college *Poems on Various Occasions* (1737), Shenstone essayed the Spenserian stanza, which,

but for a few experiments by Prior, had been in almost absolute disuse for the past century. Equally admirable with his management of this difficult measure, in a delicately humorous descriptive poem, are the anapaests of *A Pastoral Ballad* (1755), including those charming lines:

She gazed as I slowly withdrew,
My path I could hardly discern;
So sweetly she bade me adieu,
I thought that she bade me return.

Cowper owed something to these, and Gray much more to the *Elegies* scattered about his poems, most of which were published in the first instance in Dodsley's *Miscellanies*, or, rather, *Collections of Poems*. His pieces were first collected by Dodsley in 3 vols. (1764-9).

Considering the smallness of Shenstone's range it is remarkable, perhaps, that he should have written so many stanzas that live, as many of *The Schoolmistress* do—a poem particularly admired in its time by Goldsmith and Burns—and one at least of those *Lines written in an Inn at Henley*:

Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
His warmest welcome at an inn.

Occasional writing in verse and pottering over his gardens seem to have been the natural vocation of Shenstone. He was rather too querulous to be an agreeable letter-writer, and his miseries are too Lilliputian to be of profound interest. His letters are filled with the little complaints, the little gratifications, the little journeys, the little studies, and the little criticism of one whom indolence and rustication had reduced to a little man; yet he wrote some agreeable *Essays* (among the best written during the gap between Steele and Goldsmith); he had some good friends; and the sinecure for which he yearned seemed maturing, when, early in February, 1763, he got a severe chill, died at the Leasowes, unmarried, on February 10th, and was buried in Halesowen churchyard four days later. His life, says Johnson, in that masterpiece of polite raillery which he dedicates to Shenstone, "was unstained by any crime." Apart from his metrical experiments he helped in the cause of Romanticism by the generous aid and encouragement which he gave to Percy in preparing his *Ancient Ballad Poetry* for the press.¹

¹ See "A Forgotten Poet," *Cornhill*, January, 1902.

Thomas Gray, fifth child of Philip Gray, a London scrivener, was born in Cornhill, London, on December 26th, 1716. His mother, Dorothy (born Antrobus), owned the business which was carried on in Philip Gray's shop; she quarrelled with her husband, a lazy and selfish man, who left her to pay for the son's education. Fortunately her brother, William Antrobus, was a master at Eton, where Gray was sent in 1727. There, with Horace Walpole, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton, he formed the little coterie afterwards known as the Quadruple Alliance; he proceeded to Peterhouse, where another uncle, Robert Antrobus, had been a fellow. He scorned his studies and cut his lectures; in 1739 he went on the grand tour as companion to Horace Walpole, but here again his fastidious and unconciliatory temper declared itself. He parted from Walpole, and returned home in September, 1741. During his tour he wrote some descriptive letters to his friends which show a susceptibility to the picturesque side of things uncommon at that time. The summer of 1742 was spent by Gray with his mother and aunts (now retired from business) at Stoke Poges, where he wrote his best verses, *Ode to Spring*, *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, *Sonnet on the Death of West*, and the early stanzas of the *Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard*. None of these were printed before 1747. In the winter of 1742 Gray resumed residence at Peterhouse, and buried himself among the classics. During the following year Gray first met (*vidit tantum*) Pope. In 1745 he was reconciled to Walpole, to whom, on March 1st, 1747, he sent his charming mock-heroic *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*, enshrined in a letter full of delicate persiflage. In this same year he commenced his friendship with a young scholar and poet of St. John's at Cambridge, William Mason, his future biographer and exploiter. Now, too, appeared his *Eton College Ode*, in a folio pamphlet of eight pages (Dodsley). It was reprinted next year with the *Ode to Spring*, and that on the *Death of Walpole's Cat*, in the second volume of Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748). In 1749 Gray took up once more and laboured at his unfinished *Elegy*; he kept retouching it until June 12th, 1750, when he sent a copy to his poetical chancellor, Horace Walpole. Like Shakespeare's "sugared sonnets" or *Christabel*, it was circulated for some months in MS. Walpole's circle were apt

to admire it as a most elegant *tour de force* by an unknown Cambridge don. In February, 1751, in order to anticipate a surreptitious issue by a magazine (*The Magazine of Magazines*), it was brought out in a quarto pamphlet entitled *An Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard*, price 6d. "Nurse Dodsley has given it a pinch or two in its cradle," the sensitive author complained to Walpole. The *Elegy* commanded success no less by its originality than by its lucidity and beauty. A train of moralising as obvious as that of "All the world's a stage" is wrought in the same perfect manner; in this case into a harmony of gentle pathos that at once saddens and soothes. There are one or two flaws, of course, and the number and regularity of the epithets tend generally to become oppressive; but, upon the whole, the diction, decoration, and treatment of the theme, as well as the choice of metre (used by Davenant in his *Gondibert* and Dryden in his *Annus Mirabilis*; also for this same purpose of elegy, before Gray's time, by James Hammond and Shenstone and others), consecrated by Gray's usage as "elegiac," are most artistically in accord. Few poems as a whole are more faultless. Its merit was patent even to an "age of prose." A rage set in for "night pieces" and churchyard soliloquies in verse. Yet few poems stand so serenely alone. It is the one poem which Gray really finished before he was forty, and it was by far his finest effort. "Had Gray written often thus it had been vain to blame and useless to praise him."

If anything could have kindled Gray's muse this resonant success must have done it. But Gray was a college don—with private means, a superior intellect, and nothing particular to do. When he published a few selected poems in 1753, they appeared as "*Designs by R. Bentley for six Poems by T. Gray*." He was afraid of a barbed arrow being aimed at this *ridiculus mus* of production after twenty years of poetic labour. His own attempt at metrical pleasantries, after the manner of Prior in *A Long Story* (admiration of which Walpole made a *sine qua non* of all his correspondents), had fallen remarkably flat, in spite of its distinguished patronage. The publication of his elaborate *Pindaric Odes* (Pindaric odes of many years' growth), *The Bard*, and *The Progress of Poesy* elicited the comment from Johnson: "Some that tried them confessed their inability to understand them . . . many

were content to be shown beauties they could not see."¹

Gray seldom emerged from his college, *digitò monstrari*; he read persistently and very widely, cultivated a circle of superior friends in letters, of which we still possess upwards of 350, not comparing indeed, as a *corpus* with the letters of Cowper, Walpole, or FitzGerald, but unsurpassed even in the golden age of letter-writing, in England; and travelled in search of the "picturesque," of which he was one of the first propagators. The bewildering succession of his studies between 1750 and 1770 illustrates the extraordinary activity and versatility of his mind. From such academic enthusiasms as Plato and Xenophon we find him turning with zeal to Gothic architecture, branching out from that into the study of mediæval and Scandinavian poetry, while in another direction he absorbs all that he can about heraldry and genealogy. His historical interests are aroused, and the need of digesting chronicles and State papers allures him, in 1759, to the newly opened British Museum, of which (with two Prussians, Dr. Stukeley and another as sole companions) he is one of the first serious readers.

The vast learning that he acquired in this manner he transmitted not to the world but to private commonplace books. In the case of the great classified History of English Poetry which he had projected with Mason, he made over a large part of his material to Thomas Warton. The indirect influence of Gray's tastes was, in fact, much greater than would at first appear. But the last and strongest of his passions was his love for natural history. "His comments in his Linnæus," says Arnold, "are those of an intelligent naturalist. His notes on the signs of the approach of summer almost approach the delicacy of a 'Gil' White, or a Jefferies. He notes the changes of the landscape in the progress of the day; marks

the hoar-frost that melts and exhales in a thin bluish smoke, and rejoices in the tender emerald green preserved late in the summer by the long rains."

The diary which he kept of the journey he made to the English Lakes in 1769 attests his exquisite sense of the beauties of natural scenery. He was, as we know, a great virtuoso in gardening as well as in painting, music, and architecture. In returning from the Letters to the Life we seem to be quitting the society of one of the most urbane, erudite, and interesting of correspondents for that of a somewhat queer-tempered, pedantic, and affected man. The affectation of superior elegance was due in large measure to Walpole, who had inoculated Gray with the flunkey virus at the age when he was most prone to a permanent infection.

The explanation of Gray's "sterility" by the fact that he was born in an "age of prose" is too silly to need refutation. What poet is not born in an age of prose? Gray had a fairly long life, during which, in spite of the ridicule of a few old critics such as Johnson, his reputation gradually increased. He was born into the same age as Collins and Cowper, and, like them, suffered much from dejection ("my spirits are many degrees below changeable"); but whereas dejection inspired Cowper to exertion, and sent him forth to meet his Muse, it caused Gray to dally with the "bardic impulse" until it eluded him altogether. A more interesting question in regard to Gray is this: will posterity admit among the immortals a poet who carries such a very small volume of poetry under his arm? When the volume is opened, it is found to be written for the most part in copperplate of a highly conventional form (Gray's ordinary script was of a scholarly smallness and delicacy): the poems themselves suggest a tessellated work—a multitude of semi-archaic plaques upon a substructure

¹ The drift of the *Odes* was held by plain folk and wicked wags such as Colman and Lloyd (authors of the burlesque odes on Obscurity and Oblivion) to be utterly impenetrable; but this very circumstance helped to raise Gray in the estimation of the unlearned, and when Colley Cibber died in 1757 (Goldsmith and Cowper being still mute), the Duke of Devonshire's offer of the laureateship to Gray was thought to be a popular move. He refused it for fear of the ridicule, as he refused a doctor's degree for fear of being confused with Dr. Zachary Gray. A like sensitiveness led to his migration at Cambridge. His London house having been burned down in 1748, he became morbidly afraid of fire (drunkenness, he averred, was so terribly prevalent at Cambridge). In January, 1756, he ordered a rope ladder from London. Some larkly undergraduates at Peterhouse got wind of this and raised a false alarm of fire. Gray descended the cords like another Latude, and found himself in a large tub of water which his young friends had thoughtfully provided for his reception. The Master persisting in treating the occurrence as a "boyish frolic," the angry bard shook the dust of Peterhouse from his feet and moved to Pembroke, where he was nearly burned out in grim earnest in 1768.

of Dryden, with adjectival ornament of early-Miltonic type, together with a far-fetched abundance of personifications, compound words and hyphenated epithets. Every attribute of the poet to which scholarship, taste, refinement are contributory, he possessed to the full, but not linked, as in Milton's case, with strong creative or imaginative power. He can hardly thus be admitted into the fraternity of the *dii majores* of poetry, though as the writer of at least one imperishable poem he towers above the minors. As a factor in the romantic movement his letters (so keenly admired by Cowper) interest the historical student of literature much more than his poems.

Cambridge continued to be his chief place of residence, though he performed no duties there. The year 1759 he spent largely in Southampton Row, making researches into ancient and northern poetry at the newly opened British Museum. He was occasionally the guest of his aunts at Stoke Poges, of Walpole, Wharton, and other friends. He visited different parts of England and Scotland, and was one of the earliest ardently to celebrate the beauty of the Lakes, of the Wye, of the New Forest, and the Highlands. In 1771 he contemplated a visit to his young Cambridge friend Bonstetten at his home in Switzerland. On July 24th he was suddenly taken ill in Pembroke Hall; the next day the gout reached his stomach, and he died on July 30th, 1771.¹ He was buried in the churchyard at Stoke Poges, near the east window of the church, on August 6th.

A copious producer for the book-market, Johnson regarded the "costive" wit of the cloistered and fastidious Gray with a contempt not unusual in the professional who writes for pay towards the amateur who is amiably tickled at his own condescension in consenting to do anything so vulgar as to publish at all. He had a notion, says his great critic, "not very peculiar, that he could not write but at certain times, or at happy moments; a fantastic foppery, to which my kindness for a man of learning and of virtue wishes him to have been superior."

All the writer in Johnson was jealous of new-fangled ideas which he imperfectly understood; impatient of the unaccustomed diction,

as Macaulay was of the novelties of Ruskin and Carlyle. As a man his good-humoured contempt for Gray's character was perfectly sincere. Gray was a fellow of a College in Cambridge, precise, finicking, and reserved in manner. The dignified little man had few intimates; he was a great reader, a scholar of marvellously wide range, reputed "the most learned man in Europe." But, as Johnson saw and said, he did very little with his learning. Five or six poems was not a great result of so much reading. The niggardliness of the output was, however, more complex than Johnson supposed. He was a miser of immortal verse. Ill-health, a fondness for preparing prolegomena and parallel lines of investigation, while putting off the main issue, fastidiousness, the habit of reading on a sofa, the paralysing influence of a small circle of hypercritical dons—these are a few of the causes that help to explain it.

What Johnson failed to perceive was that beneath Gray's reserved exterior there was great depth of feeling; and that with all his minute scholarship, he was a man of large and comprehensive views. Constitutional melancholy and self-distrust seem to have been the secrets of his small amount of production. But this was not known fully to the world until after his death. He never spoke out during his life. We can interpret him now by the light of his familiar letters, the cynosure of cultivated charm. But this was impossible when Johnson wrote, and any apparent injustice done to Gray by "Ursa Major" (Gray's own nickname for the great critic) was due, not to jealousy or wilful blindness, but to a want of knowledge that was inaccessible when Johnson wrote.

At the very time that Gray was composing his *Elegy* with such fastidious pains, Collins and the Wartons had published poems out of which every detail of his eventide picture might have been culled. These poets, like Gray himself, were in "that advancing line of which Thomson and Dyer were the fugle-men at an earlier date."

In Collins above all is to be found the germ of the romantic movement which blossomed in *Christabel*. The new notes which he sounded reverberate distinctly through the successive

¹ *The Gentleman's Magazine* gives his death "31 July, Rev. Dr. Thomas Grey." Four errors in six words! The cream of Johnsonian comment is not in the *Lives of the Poets* but in *Boswell*.—"Boswell: I understand he was reserved and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry. Johnson: Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made many think him great. . . . Sir, he was a mechanical poet."

appeals from the classical school made by the Wartons, Gray, Chatterton, Percy, Russell and the Ossianic poems. How far he was effective as an initiator is a point much more difficult to determine. There seems little doubt of the debt incurred to Collins by Gray, though Gray rebukes without ceremony the superior poet's incorrectness and lack of ear. Collins's exquisite *Ode to Evening* commences by appealing to a mode or phase of meditation closely akin to that of the *Elegy*.

The son of a hatter of 21, East Street, Chichester, where he was born on Christmas Day, 1721, William Collins was educated at Winchester¹ and at Queen's College, whence (like Addison) he migrated as a demy to Magdalen, Oxford. Of the number of his fellow-students and friends were White of Selborne, William Whitehead, and Joseph Warton. Amid the dissipation and "idleness" of his college days he published a slender volume of *Persian Eclogues* (1742); and he must have read widely and with some judgment, if we may go by the *Epistle* which he addressed to Sir Thomas Hanmer in 1743 on his edition of Shakespeare, and which contains a noteworthy if isolated fragment of criticism. As a career he contemplated vaguely first the church and then the army, but a rich uncle pronounced him too indolent "even for the army." At twenty-four he proceeded to London, having "many projects in his head." He "planned" tragedies, a history of the revival of learning, and a version of Aristotle's poetics. On December 20th, 1746, he published through the fashionable "A. Millar in the Strand" a thin octavo pamphlet of three and a half sheets, his *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects*. These included the *Ode to Evening*, the sounds of which steal slowly upon the senses like the very coming of eve, *The Passions*, and the flute-like *Ode to Pity*. The venture met with a chilling reception, though five of the best pieces were annexed in Dodsley's *Collection* of 1748. Collins in disgust cremated the "remainder" copies and sank into a dejected state. The frigidity of the public actually exercised upon him the numbing effect which it has erroneously been stated to have had upon

Keats. Swinburne writes finely concerning his *Odes* that, compared with the fanfaronade and falsetto which impair the notes of Gray, there is in them hardly a single false note to be found; and not many less than sweet and strong. "There was, above all things, a purity of music, a clarity of style, to which I know no parallel in English verse from the death of Andrew Marvell to the birth of William Blake. Here, in the twilight which followed on the splendid sunset of Pope, was at last a poet, who was content to sing out what he had in him—to sing and not to say, without a glimpse of wit or a flash of eloquence." His one discerning critic among contemporaries was his neighbour at Richmond, James Thomson, on whose death in August, 1748, he wrote the pathetic ode containing these lines:

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore,
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar
To bid his gentle spirit rest.

In 1749 he addressed his *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands*, his last surviving work, to John Home, the author of *Douglas*. This beautiful ode, prophetic of so much that has since come to pass in the sphere of imaginative poetry, shows that up to 1749 he was in full enjoyment of his powers. Anything that he wrote after this he destroyed. In 1749 he was rescued from poverty by his uncle's legacy. But as Johnson observes, "man is not born for happiness. Collins, who while he studied to live felt no evil but poverty, no sooner lived to study than his life was assailed by more dreadful calamities, disease and insanity." A visit to France failed to cheer his mind. Relapsing into habitual melancholia, he was placed in an asylum at Chelsea, and he recovered so far as to be able to return to Chichester and revise his *Eclogues*. Johnson sympathised profoundly with the man ("whose state I have often been near myself"), though he could not appreciate his poetry. It is related that he used to wander through the aisles of Chichester Cathedral accompanying the organ with his moans. He died aged thirty-eight at his sister Elizabeth's house adjoining the cloisters.² A monument by Flaxman

¹ In January, 1739, *The Gentleman's Magazine* had some lines by Collins; in October he and Warton both sent verses from Winchester, which Johnson praised. Collins's contribution was a sonnet.

² He was buried opposite the pulpit in St. Andrew's Church, as an inscription records: "W^m Collins, gent, d. June 15. 1759." The Poems of Collins are in the Aldine and in the Muses' Library (Johnson, Goldsmith, Gray, and Collins), 1905.

(with Hayley's inscription) was erected in the Cathedral about 1790.

Among the friends and poetic allies and abettors in literary antiquarianism of the school which Collins heralded, we must not omit to reckon with the Wartons. Joseph and Thomas Warton were the sons of Thomas Warton, vicar of Basingstoke, who had been a fellow of Magdalen, and Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Joseph was a schoolfellow of Collins at Winchester. He eventually became master of Winchester, and died there in 1800, *æt.* 78. Thomas was born at Basingstoke on January 9th, 1728, and, after coaching by his father, distinguished himself at Oxford (Trinity College), where he remained a familiar figure of a don for nearly fifty years. For romping with schoolboys, for heavily shotted jests in the common-room, for rousing buffoonery in the tavern, there was not such another as Tom Warton. Joseph made himself known by his candid criticism of Pope in his *Essay on the Genius* of that poet in 1757. Both brothers were enthusiastic for Spenser and the older poetry. They were alike saturated with Milton, and their verse bears traces of the *Sonnets*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and, above all, *Il Penseroso* in almost every line. They attempted to revive old verse-forms (the sonnet), old tastes (mediæval architecture), and old studies (British mythology), and to enlarge the moping owl and mortuary convention and vocabulary which was so inexpressibly dear to all these crepuscular romanticists. Thomas Warton not only championed "ode and elegy and sonnet," but wrote some very delicately tinted sonnets himself, and thereby won the praise of Southey and of Charles Lamb. Ridiculed by "Ursa Major" the Wartons became warm adherents of Gray

in all his pet connoisseurships, and Thomas received as a direct legacy from the Cambridge professor (Gray was Regius Professor of History) a large quantity of critical material which he ultimately embodied in his epoch-making *History of English Poetry* (1774-81), forming a treasure-house of those clues by means of which students of poetry found their way back to the magic uplands of Romance. Joseph Warton died at Winchester in 1800, Thomas at Oxford in 1790. Five years earlier he had given to the world his priceless edition of Milton's *Early Poems*, one of the landmarks of English verse-craft. Of the Wartons it is well said that they did as much as any of their contemporaries to discover the enchanted horn which hangs suspended outside the halls of romance. But to wind a blast of the horn was beyond the reach of their art. That they had to leave to poets of a more vigorous inspiration—to striplings, lusty as Coleridge, or with the youthful lungs of Chatterton and Keats.

If the Wartons represent the enthusiasms, they also represent the extravagances of the interesting but very *unspontaneous* poets of what we might call the laboratory school of English verse. In order to sustain their fight against the tyranny of the Pope-standard these poets became audibly dependent upon spells distilled from Milton and Spenser. The result is that their workmanship is but too often suggestive of the distorting effects of the mirror. Collins is undoubtedly the most exquisite and most lyrical of the group, Gray the finest scholar, Shenstone the least inspired though perhaps the most versatile. But Thomson was the most original, and that in a poem which he avowedly imitated from Spenser.¹

¹ The early editions of Gray by Mason, Mitford, and Gilfillan have been eclipsed by the more recent editions of Bradshaw (Aldine), Gosse (Works in 4 vols.), D. C. Tovey (Gray's *English Poems*, 1898), and W. L. Phelps (Selections, 1894, with short Bibliography). The best biographical sketch is that by Whitwell Elwin in his *Remains*. The poet is represented in a most agreeable light in his *Letters*, the most comprehensive edition of which is that commenced by D. C. Tovey in 1900, and in the little book on *The Poet Gray as a Naturalist* (1903) by Charles Eliot Norton, containing the most exquisite drawings by Gray of birds and insects. His rooms at college were completely filled with books, but in each window was a small garden. Hidden away under the books was an old harpsichord. Successive portfolios indicated the growth of his taste as a connoisseur of engravings. "Shakespeare and Linnæus contended for his soul." Such was Gray, the author of a poem which has given to multitudes "more of the exquisite pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in the glorious treasury of English verse."

CHAPTER VII

SAMUEL JOHNSON

'The last of the Tories . . . the bravest of the brave. . . . Few men on record have had a more merciful, tenderly affectionate nature than old Samuel. He was called the Bear ; and did indeed too often look, and roar, like one ; being forced to it in his own defence ; yet within that shaggy exterior of his there beat a heart warm as a mother's, soft as a little child's. . . . Tears trickling down the granite rock : a soft well of Pity springs within !'—CARLYLE.

"The best proof that Johnson was an extraordinary character is that his character instead of being degraded has, on the whole, been decidedly raised by a work in which all his vices and weaknesses are exposed more unsparingly than they were ever exposed by Churchill or by Kenrick. . . . The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive."—MACAULAY.

Education—Early struggle in London—The *Dictionary*—The *Rambler*—The *Lives of the Poets*—Dictator of the Club—Letter to Lord Chesterfield.

DR. JOHNSON'S very appearance is more familiar to us through portraits and descriptions than that of any other person of past generations. His massive figure still haunts Fleet Street, and he has "stamped his memory upon the remote Hebrides." His personal habits, his tricks of speech, his outlook upon life, all have become part of our national consciousness, and have encouraged both men in the past and men now living to support life with a manlier fortitude and an enlarged hope. The courage and beneficence of his own life, confirmed by the reports of all who knew him best, have justly become a treasured possession of the English race, of whose good points and of whose foibles he was an epitome. His intellect was not unworthy of his other qualities, the strength and weakness of which it reflected with fidelity. His conversation was even more remarkable than his writings, admirable though the best of these were, and has conferred upon him a species of fame which no Englishman shares with him in any considerable degree. The exceptional traits which were combined in his personality have met in the person of Boswell with a delineator unrivalled in patience, dexterity, and dramatic insight. The result has been a portrait of a man of letters more lifelike than that which any other age or nation has bequeathed to us.

Samuel Johnson was born at Lichfield on September 18th, 1709. His father had a shop

in Lichfield and a stall where he sold books at Birmingham, Uttoxeter, and other towns. He understood his trade, and was in addition a man of some learning. Of Mrs. Johnson we know little, save that she was pious and over-anxious. In March, 1712, the youthful Samuel was taken up to London and touched by Queen Anne for the King's Evil (in other words, for the scrofulous malady which affected his eyesight and prejudiced his general health).

Johnson's progress as a scholar does not seem to have been prejudiced either by his ailment or by the repeated floggings which he had to undergo. After his return from school to Lichfield he loitered at home for two years, reading in a desultory and discursive fashion all the ancient writers in his father's shop. In 1728 he went into residence at Pembroke College, Oxford, as companion and private teacher to an old schoolfellow. He seems to have been a truant from university lectures, but was feared and respected for his immense memory, precocious wit and independence of mind, and out-of-the-way learning. But he had to leave Oxford, owing to lack of resources, at Christmas, 1729, and returned to Lichfield in a very hypochondriacal state without taking his degree. He could already speak Latin fluently, and his knowledge of the phraseological resources of the tongue is made manifest by the fine translation of Pope's *Messiah* which he made in 1729. He added to this while at Oxford a sound knowledge of Greek. In

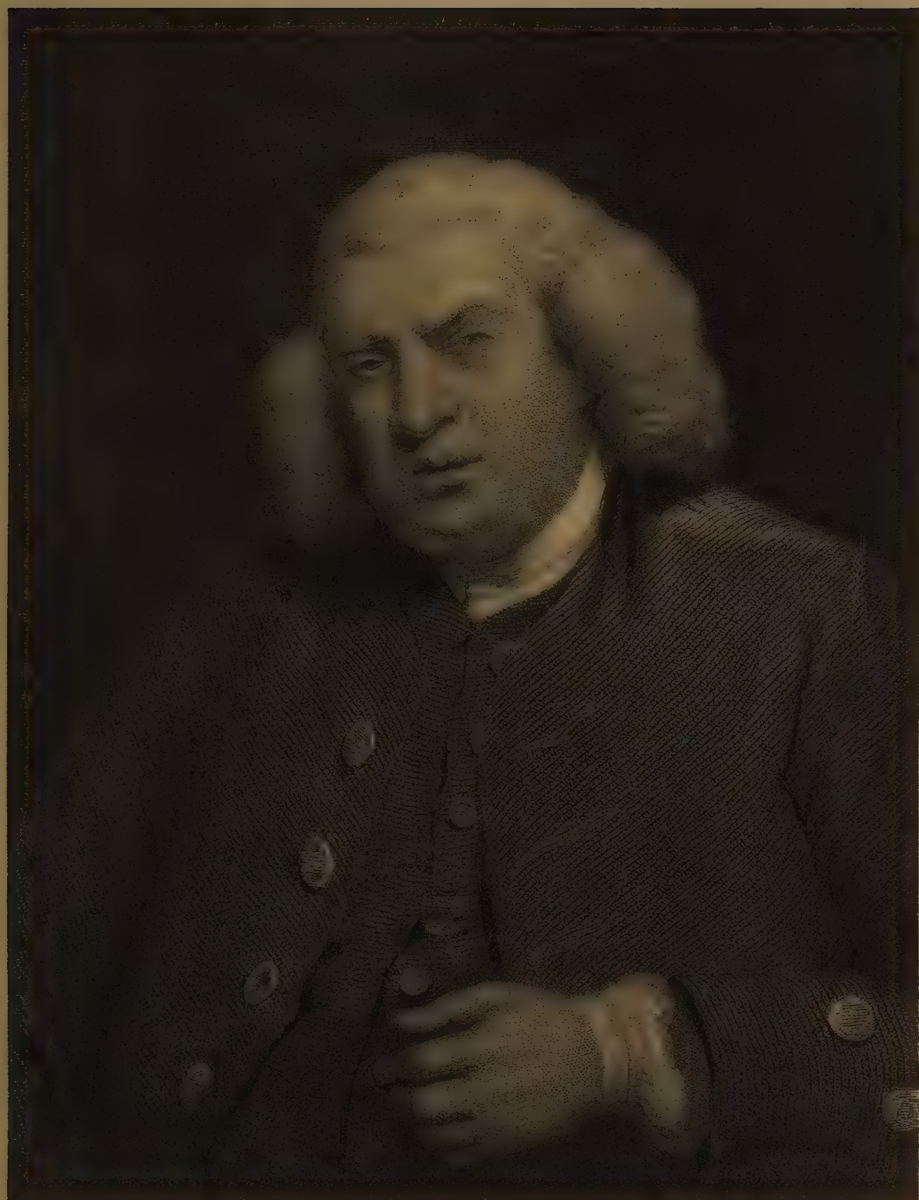
addition to his Greek, Johnson's congenital Jacobitism was greatly strengthened and confirmed at Oxford. There, too, his religious views were vitalised by a reading of Law's *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, a book which he took up to laugh at, but found quite an "overmatch" for him. He always averred that he had wasted his time at Oxford, but his standard was, it might seem, impossibly high, for he once said he "never knew a man who studied hard." At the home to which he now returned there was no welcome for Johnson, and in March, 1732, he became usher in a school at Market Bosworth. His reason for leaving the school was that he was treated like a menial by the patron, Sir Wolstan Dixie, at whose table he had to say grace.

Of the £20 which Johnson's father had left him upon his death in December, 1731, little now remained. But, undaunted, the young man of twenty-two went to Birmingham and stayed with friends, spending whole days in bed, from which, in the early days of 1734, he dictated the first book ever written in Johnsonese, a translation of Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia*. In 1735 he was proposed by an influential friend for the mastership of a small grammar school, but the "faces" that Johnson habitually made (probably nervous contortions due to his disorder) so alarmed the trustees that they felt debarred from engaging "so good a schollar." These same twitchings lost him a similar post in 1736.

The years following his marriage, 1737-47, when the *Dictionary* was planned, form the most cheerless section of Johnson's life. For a short time upon the products of his wife's dowry he set up a small school at Edial, near Lichfield, where he had for his pupils the two sons of a half-pay officer of his native town, named Garrick, and one or two others. Judging by the example of his later years, when he was not living from hand to mouth, he probably took things fairly easily. At any rate the school was a failure, and, in 1737, Johnson set out to London in the company of David Garrick with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of *Irene* in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction in his pocket, leaving his wife to follow next year.

Such occupation as was open to the professional "hackney" was soon obtained by Johnson. From 1738 he was employed by Edward Cave upon *The Gentleman's Magazine*,

a sapless periodical then seven years old. One of his chief tasks was the compilation from rough notes supplied by Cave of the parliamentary debates. The idea was to supply "the essence of Parliament," but as direct reporting was forbidden the speakers were introduced under transparent nicknames as Senators of Lilliput. Where the notes were defective Johnson drew upon his own imagination, taking care, as he afterwards declared, "that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it." In this same year (1738) he got £10 for his poem *London*, in imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal, a gloomy but powerful variation in declamatory verse upon the theme, "Slow rises Worth by Poverty depressed." Pope prophesied that the author would soon be *déterré*; ten years later the poem was praised by Gray as one of the few imitations which renew the ease and spirit of an original. In the meantime, however, Johnson was occupied upon translations, and even less remunerative work. He wrote sermons, prefaces, and advertisements, and compiled indexes, living at the rate of five-pence-a day, visiting his patrons on clean-shirt days, but frequently so shabby that he could not appear in public at all. Osborne, the bookseller, had the temerity to reprove him for some negligence in preparing a catalogue of the Harleian Library, and was knocked down by the offended scholar with a folio Septuagint. "I have beat many a fellow," said the great man afterwards to Mrs. Piozzi, "but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues." In 1744 he wrote off at a white heat his powerful though erroneous *Life of Richard Savage*, a scamp whose talent was threadbare enough, but whose wide experience of life had gained him the ear and the sympathy of Johnson, ever ready to listen to a tale of distress. *The Life of Savage* contributed greatly to extend Johnson's reputation. He was one day sitting in Robert Dodsley's shop when that bookseller took occasion to observe that a dictionary of the English language would be a work that would be well received by the public. Johnson caught at the idea, but after a pause said, "I believe I shall not undertake it." He had, however, pondered such a work, and Dodsley's suggestion probably clinched the matter. The bookseller induced him, in 1747, to address a scheme or "Plan" of the dictionary to Lord Chesterfield, then Secretary of State and the contemporary Mæcenas. The payment of the work was



After the Painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Samuel Johnson

undertaken by a combination of booksellers. Johnson was to receive a sum of £1,575, out of which he had to pay several amanuenses. Asked by Dr. Adams how he expected to finish such a work in three years, while the French Academy of forty had taken forty years to compile their dictionary, Johnson replied jocularly, "Sir, thus it is: this is the proportion; forty times forty is 1,600. As three to 1,600, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." It took five or six men the best part of eight years before the *Dictionary* was complete. In the meantime, in January, 1749, appeared his second poem, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, a poem more sincere in its melancholy than its predecessor, an exercise greatly admired by Scott and by Byron, embodying as it does a stoical dignity so truly profound and touching that it may well claim to inscribe the veritable "mottoes of the human heart." The same year saw the production of Johnson's tragedy, *Irene* (which had been refused in 1738), at Drury Lane, through the kind offices of his friend Garrick. The players' zeal procured for *Irene* a better reception than it deserved (it ran for nine evenings). Apart from its frigidity and its lack of dramatic interest, the blank verse in which it is composed is execrably bad, speaking volumes as to Johnson's subsequent judgments upon pre-Drydenian verse. The great lexicographer probably cherished some illusions about his early tragedy, but when asked how he felt upon his ill success, replied, "Like the Monument." In later years, when some passages were read from it he left the room, and subsequently remarked that "he did not think it had been so bad."

In March, 1750, when the *Dictionary* was in mid-course, Johnson commenced his periodical, *The Rambler*, which continued to appear at the price of twopence every Thursday and Saturday, down to March, 1752. A few days after the appearance of the last number, Mrs. Johnson died. He took up a similar periodical, *The Idler*, in 1758-60. Between the two, and his contribution to *The Adventurer* of his old associate Hawkesworth, Johnson must have written fully three hundred of the ponderous essays popular at that day. Their pleasantries recall Johnson's descriptions of Burke's attempts at humour as those of "a beetle in the mire." The women characters, as Garrick said, were all "Johnsons in petticoats," and the hard words so numerous that the style was said to be

designed to prepare the way for the great *Dictionary*. This epoch-making work, our standard English dictionary for over a century, appeared in 1755. The same year witnessed the manly reproof which he administered to Lord Chesterfield in his memorable "Letter." But Johnson was no better off for the work which had made him famous. He was tired and indolent; he preferred "poverty and the pride of literature" to any fresh enterprise involving toil. He fell into extreme indigence and was more than once arrested for debt. In 1759 his mother died, and during the evenings of a single week he threw off *Rasselas*, a long "Rambler" tricked out in the setting of an Oriental novel (somewhat after the manner of the Oriental tales of which Voltaire had caught the idea from Swift), in order to defray her debts and pay the expenses of her funeral. The release from his worst period of bondage was now at hand. In 1762 he received his pension of £300 a year from George III.; next year he made the acquaintance of Boswell; "the club" was formed in 1764, and in 1765 he made the acquaintance of Mr. Thrale, a rich brewer with a comfortable villa at Streatham, where a room was always prepared for him. From Gough Square to Staple Inn, from Staple Inn to Inner Temple Lane, Johnson now made his last move to a gloomy house in Bolt Court, where he retained a *pied-à-terre* for himself and his books, and his negro servant Francis; while the larger part of the house was devoted to his poor pensioners, Miss Williams, Mrs. Desmoulins, Miss Carmichael, Dr. Levett, and his pampered cat "Hodge."

His own time he consecrated more and more to strenuous talk, to the cultivation of his friends, to club-life and to travel; revisiting with increasing fondness his old college at Oxford, the house of his old school-friend, Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourne, and his early haunts at Lichfield. Henceforth we trace his life along the stream of his talk recorded by Boswell in his inimitable pages. It is but too plain that a marked coldness supervened during the autumn of 1784, owing, probably, to Johnson's intolerance of Bozzy's valetudinarian lamentations, which prevented them seeing more of each other until Johnson's death on December 13th. He was seventy-five at the time of his death, which produced an immense sensation in England. He was buried in the Abbey on December 20th, 1784, and among his pall-

bearers were Burke, Windham, and Sir Joseph Banks.

"The names of many great writers are inscribed upon the walls of Westminster Abbey," says Sir Leslie Stephen, "but scarcely any one lies there whose heart was more acutely responsive during life to the deepest and tenderest of human emotions. . . . There are many whose words and deeds have a far greater influence upon our imaginations; but there are very few, when all has been said, whom we can love so heartily as Samuel Johnson."

Externally, Johnson must appear to have been a slovenly, dirty, and in many ways repulsive-mannered man. He suffered from melancholia, which bordered at times almost upon madness; he was very subject to irritable ebullitions, and was often offensively overbearing, passionate, harsh, and dictatorial in company. These offensive habits, whether of mind or person, were traceable almost entirely either to his early poverty or his mental affliction, and did not prevent him ruling with an agreeable sway a numerous society of well-bred people, by whom he was cultivated for the stimulus which his wit and wisdom never failed to supply. Such an inveterate hater of sham sympathy and sentimentality was Johnson that many of his sayings have a rough and uncompromising sound. But practically he was the most beneficent of men. To the poor he was generosity itself. A profound compassion was the deepest fibre of that noble and courageous nature. The example that he set, the friendships that he made, the good things that he said, outweigh the importance of his literary influence or of his actual writings, considerable though these were.

When Johnson obtained his pension in 1762 he had already achieved a position as a species of dictator of the literary republic of the metropolis. As poet and scholar, as grammarian and moral essayist, and still more perhaps by his well-known versatility as an occasional writer; by his reserve power, and by his value as a literary consultant, he had obtained a unique position among professional writers of the day, though it was generally recognised that he had achieved nothing fully commensurate with his powers. Henceforth composition became increasingly irksome to him; he had written extraordinarily well under pressure, but now that the pressure was removed he tried to evade writing altogether, and all the writing

that he was induced to do was undertaken under conditions involving an application of something resembling the old stimulus as closely as might be. In 1765 he was forced by shame into producing the edition of Shakespeare for which he had issued proposals and taken subscriptions nine years earlier. Done, as it was, at a white heat, his preface forms one of the most vigorous essays that ever came from his pen. In 1774 he produced a fairly vivacious account of his *Journey to the Hebrides*. Three years later a syndicate of booksellers which had resolved upon an elaborate edition of the English Poets, sent a deputation to him requesting that he would furnish a short life of each poet upon his own terms. He was delighted with the proposal, and named two hundred guineas as the price. The scheme expanded under his hands, and much of it was accomplished in a very hasty, irregular, and unequal fashion. In this way it occupied him nearly four years, and he was eventually paid four hundred guineas. The *Lives* were written at a happy hour, when Johnson had receded most from the pompousness of his verbose period (that of *The Rambler*), and before his health or mental powers had begun to show any signs of abatement. The *Lives* were an immense success, and soon became as popular as they have almost ever since continued to be. No critical work in our language, perhaps, shows more native vigour than the *Lives of the Poets*; no book contains so many sound and original canons of criticism. Johnson was by no means satisfied by the impressionistic method, and of those writers, into whose pretensions he went at all deeply, he sought to give a motived and authoritative criticism. That he undervalued the musical and imaginative qualities in poetry can hardly be denied, and his estimates of the early poems of Milton and of the odes of Collins and Gray are aggressively depreciatory; but he demanded of poetry primarily that it should be sensible, not that it should sing. All good poetry, he held, could be turned into good prose; except for metre and rhyme, he saw no distinction between the two. In matters of poetical taste, he was faithful to the ideals of Dryden and Pope, and never really got beyond them. But we must be on our guard against interpreting the views expressed in the *Lives* too seriously as a final expression of Johnson's poetical creed. Biography was his favourite study, but it had its



From the Painting by E. M. Ward, R.A.

Doctor Johnson waiting for an audience with Lord Chesterfield

irksome side, and he did not intend that the booksellers (he knew the dogs well) should get too much the best of their bargain. He said that it was useless to criticise what nobody reads. Nevertheless, he wrote judicial memoirs of Stepney, Duke, Sprat, King, Hughes, Blackmore, Fenton, Hammond, Broome, West, Mallet, and Lyttelton. If the details were handy, well and good. If not, he was quite prepared to supply their place with his own shrewd reflections and sombre philosophy of living and dying. George III. suggested that Spenser might be included among the bead-roll of our "English Poets." But Johnson himself could only be brought to recommend for inclusion Blackmore, Pomfret, Yalden, and Watts. To such poetasters he was ever indulgent. He kept his thunders for Milton and Gray. Thus, after belabouring *Lycidas*, fist and cudgel, he solemnly takes up his quill to put on record the fact that Rowe's translation of Lucan is "one of the greatest productions of English poetry." It is true that some of the best Lives, such as those of Milton, Cowley, Dryden, and Pope, elicited Johnson's best powers; but he can have never thought of expending upon these "notices" either the profound thought or the careful revision which a systematic treatise on English poetry would require. He was already an old man when he undertook it, and had an established reputation which had little to gain by the promulgation of new views or the shedding of old prejudices.

When Shakespeare wrote he dipped his pen in his heart; "when Johnson writes tragedy," as Garrick said, "declamation roars and passion sleeps," and when we turn to his other writings, with one or two exceptions we shall find that they have the one fault that comprises all others: they are alike unreadable. They are sententious, polysyllabic, but, above all, commonplace. That life is short, that marriages from mercenary motives produce unhappiness, that different men are virtuous in different degrees, that advice is generally ineffectual, that adversity has its uses, that fame is liable to suffer from detraction—these are the maxims which Dr. Johnson, whether he was "Rambling," or "Idling," sought, not once or twice, to inculcate upon his fellow-mortals. He was not himself unconscious of his tendency to use too big words and too many of them, and he managed to subdue it, to a great extent, in his *Lives of the Poets*, as he had done with relative success in

his nearest approach to a work of art, the poem on *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. But it is not primarily as an artist that Johnson impresses us. Is it then as a great thinker? Of the wisdom that consists of applying the touchstone of common sense to every subject of converse it can hardly be denied that Johnson was a great master. And, so far as this goes, he was no doubt a philosopher. But as a systematic thinker, he could hardly be rated at all. When his massive intellect could be brought to bear upon the problems of history, law, metaphysics, or even physical science, however rugged they might be, it could hardly fail to make an impression. But he addressed himself to such problems with the greatest reluctance. Biography, literary criticism, personal gossip—these were his themes; for ancient history and philosophy he cared less and less—such subjects had no actuality for him, and so, with regard to metaphysics. We have only to compare Johnson with a contemporary like Rousseau, to recognise how extraordinarily circumscribed was his influence as a thinker. Practically none of Johnson's works have been translated, and even Boswell's *Life* is unknown abroad. In Church and State matters, Johnson was just a typical Englishman, a creature of compromise and of slow incrustations, while, by instinct and personal inclination, he was, at the same time, a thoroughgoing individualist.

As an artist, then, Johnson did not fully succeed in realising himself; as a thinker, his influence was extremely circumscribed, his horizon moreover was narrow, and he was out of touch with the greater part of the most stimulating thought of his own singularly fertile period. But it is not in either of these capacities that he really impresses us: it is as a man; a man of the world, too, who combined with a gloomy and ineradicable melancholy, and a profound sympathy for the sorrows and sufferings of his fellows, a singularly masculine and fleshy wit.

It is mainly in the right of his large humanity and this same conspicuous wit that Dr. Johnson takes rank with the great names of his generation, even if he does not fully justify the claim of his biographer that he was "the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century." His influence is harder to summarise and to define than that of any of the others. For it was not exerted by Johnson directly as an artist or as a thinker: yet it was exercised

more directly perhaps than the influence of any of the others, through the medium of literature in the largest sense, and in ultimate effect it may prove to be the most powerful and most penetrating of them all.¹

"Such was Johnson's Life: the victorious Battle of a true Man. Finally he died the

death of the free and true: a dark cloud of Death, solemn and not untinged with haloes of immortal Hope, 'took him away,' and our eyes could no longer behold him; but can still behold the trace and impress of his courageous, honest spirit, deep-legible in the World's Business, wheresoever he walked and was."

¹ Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, "the life of a mountebank and his zany," as Walpole called it, first published in May, 1791, does what is done in a greater degree perhaps by some sacred books, and in a lesser degree by Pepys, by Rousseau, and by Borrow—it transmits a personality—the heart of the secret in literature. Among professional authors Johnson will always be held in highest honour: for is he not one of the victorious champions of the dignity of the craft and mystery of letters? Wherever literature is well esteemed his famous letter to Chesterfield shall never be read without a glow of generous enthusiasm. Together with Milton's *Areopagitica*, Hood's *Epistle to Rae Wilson*, and *Stockdale v. Hansard*, it is one of the title-deeds of English Letters.

"Feb. 7th, 1755.

"MY LORD,—I have been lately informed by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my lord,

"Your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

"SAM JOHNSON."

To James Boswell of Auchinlech (1740—1795) Samuel Johnson's debt is incalculable: for to the *Anecdotes* (1785) of Mrs. Piozzi (formerly Thrale), and the *Life of Johnson* (1787) by Sir John Hawkins, "Bozzy" is as Renan is to Farrar. This incredible product of Edinburgh High School and University, when the century was at its meridian, born traveller, dilettante, gossip, cicisbeo, quidnunc, sycophant, man about town and society journalist, Boswell first met Johnson in Tom Davies's back parlour on May 16th, 1763 (it was on May 16th, just twenty-eight years later, that the immortal *Life* appeared). To the notorieties of his day Boswell attached himself with a glutinous adhesiveness. He initiated autograph hunting. He had the colossal impertinence to ask Lord Chatham to "honour him with a letter now and then." Such vagaries led even sound Johnsonians like Croker, Macaulay, and Carlyle to treat him respectively as an idiot, a fribble, and a mere fool. Dissipated, drunken, and vain as he was, with a large portion of Sterne's semi-hysterical sensibility, there is equally no doubt that Boswell was a very great writer, an Aubrey and Pepys in one, a pioneer in the portrayal of literary personality, such an artist in reporting that we cannot displace a single word without manifest loss: in a word, the author of the liveliest biography on record. The editions of Boswell's *chef d'œuvre* are as follows: Malone's four editions (1799, 1804, 1807, 1811); Chalmers (1822); Oxford (1826); Croker's three (1831, 1835, 1848); Carruthers' (1852); Fitzgerald's (1875 and 1883); A. Napier's (1884); Dr. Birkbeck Hill's (the fullest and best, 6 vols., 1887)*; the Globe (1893); Mr. Birrell's (1900); abridged by Roger Ingpen, with useful notes (in Hutchinson's Standard Shilling Biographies, 1906). See also Percy Fitzgerald's agreeable gossip *Life of Boswell*, Stephen's *Johnson* (Men of Letters), Seccombe's *Age of Johnson*. The writers are indebted to Mr. H. Spence Scott and Mr. Henry Davey for suggestions.

CHAPTER VIII

OLIVER GOLDSMITH AND R. B. SHERIDAN

"It is not to be described,—the effect that Goldsmith's *Vicar* had upon me, just at the critical moment of mental development. That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education."—GOETHE.

Goldsmith's Life—*The Critical Review*—"The Citizen of the World"—Goldsmith's Poems and Plays—*Retaliation*—*The Vicar of Wakefield*—Sheridan's Comedies.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH, born at Pallasmore, County Longford, on November 10th, 1728, was the fifth of the numerous children of Charles Goldsmith, who was parson of Pallas, and in 1730 became rector of Kilkenny West. The family income was raised by this change from £40 to nearly £200, and the Goldsmiths moved from a parsonage that resembled a cottage to one that more nearly approached a farmhouse in the neighbourhood of Lissoy ("Sweet Auburn"). Oliver was taught at the village school, at a larger school at Elphin, and in 1739 was sent to a better school at Athlone. Finally he was transferred to Edgeworthstown, and at all these schools, until he was about sixteen and his muscles began to develop, Oliver was laughed at for his ugliness and his uncouth manner. In June, 1744, he obtained a sizarship at Trinity College, Dublin, where he took his degree of B.A. on February 27th, 1749. Oliver now spent three years in idleness at the college of Ballymahon, whither his mother had retired after his father's death. In 1751 the time was ripe for Oliver to make application to the Bishop of Elphin for orders. Whether as a protest against unseemly attire (scarlet breeches are alleged) or the applicant's profound ignorance of divinity, his application was refused. Oliver, in no way dismayed, but encouraged rather by his uncle Contarine, was now sent out to commence life as a tutor. He obtained a good appointment, but the harmony of the family was disturbed (as one would expect to find in County Galway as described by Charles Lever), by disagreements as to cards between the tutor and his pupil. Subsequently he set out to

America, but got no farther than Cork; and started for the Temple with fifty pounds, but got no farther than Roscommon, whence he returned with four and twopence. One learned profession still remained. It was determined to make a doctor of Oliver. The family oracle, Dean Goldsmith of Cloyne, was consulted, and gave it as his opinion to Mr. Contarine that "his young relative would make an excellent medical man." He got to Edinburgh this time, and during 1753 we have some fascinating letters from him to his uncle, written with a purity and simplicity of style which were hereafter to make him famous. At the end of the year he drew a final twenty pounds from his uncle, and set out for Leyden, where he soon seems to have forgotten all about his medical degree. In February, 1755, he left Leyden with a guinea in his pocket, and practically no luggage save his flute. He travelled on foot through the Low Countries and France, begging his way from village to village with the aid of a trifling skill in music, and in Italy a "pretty skill in disputation." Hence Boswell's saying to Johnson, "Sir, he disputed his passage through Europe." On February 1st, 1756, he landed at Dover. For a time after his arrival in London he appears to have been almost starved, and lived, as he once astonished well-to-do friends by observing, "among the beggars in Axe Lane." Afterwards he was a druggist's assistant, and a humble practitioner in Bankside, Southwark. For a time he was described as corrector for the press in Richardson's office, and in 1757 he became usher to Dr. Milner at the Peckham Academy. He was still in this capacity in

April, 1757, when Ralph Griffiths, the bookseller and founder of *The Monthly Review*, met him and tempted him to send in a few specimens of criticisms for his paper. The specimens were so satisfactory that Goldsmith was further tempted to leave Peckham and to become one of Griffiths's regular hands at a fixed salary. Among his earliest reviews for *The Monthly* were those on Mallet's *Remains of Scandinavian Poetry*, Home's *Douglas: a Tragedy*, and Wilkie's *Epigoniad*. He also reviewed with remarkable fairness the English history of Smollett, editor of *The Monthly's* successful rival, *The Critical Review*, which Smollett had started as a Tory monthly in 1756. A half-year had scarcely elapsed in this kind of work before Griffiths and his reviewer were mutually dissatisfied. Thrown upon his own resources again, Goldsmith attempted some translations, and may have written for other periodicals than *The Monthly*. But he was alarmed at such a precarious method of life, and was reduced finally to knock once more at Dr. Milner's door at Peckham. He stayed there as usher another nine or ten months. Milner was more than kind in taking Goldsmith once more under his roof. He was sufficiently interested in him to obtain a nomination for his appointment as medical officer to an English factory on the coast of Coromandel at a salary of a hundred a year, apart from the private practice attached to it. How he lost this appointment is not quite clear, but almost certainly owing to some failure on his own part to comply with the preliminary conditions. In the meantime he had already recommenced relations with Griffiths, who became a security with a tailor for a new suit of clothes which Goldsmith needed in order to present himself as candidate at Surgeons' Hall for a post as a hospital mate in the navy. An examination was held on December 28th, 1758, when Goldsmith duly presented himself, and was one of the few who were found not qualified.

In the early months of 1759 Goldsmith did a good deal of work for Smollett on *The Critical Review*, reviewing among other books the *Miscellanies* of Montesquieu and the *Remains* of Samuel Butler; and in April the Dodsleys printed the first book which gave him a status

as an individual author, *An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*. Goldsmith's essay was a pleasant and somewhat sophistical attempt to feel the pulse of the professional writer and to give publicity to his griefs at a time when he certainly had a good deal to complain of. The booksellers were not unnaturally indignant at Goldsmith's attempt to extenuate rather than to justify the nature of their commerce, yet the essay seems to have extended his connection among them, and in October, 1759, the *Inquirer into the Polite Learning of Europe* commenced for a bookseller of St. Paul's a weekly magazine adapted to the prevailing taste of England at the moment. It was issued every Saturday, price threepence, and was called *The Bee*. He filled up his time by writing for *The Busybody* and *The Lady's Magazine*, which was intended as a prop and advertising agent for *The Bee*. *The Bee* itself was not destined to survive its eighth number, but its essays were deemed worthy of republication, and the competence shown by the essayist in the Addisonian line marked him out as a man to be secured by Smollett for the sixpenny magazine which he launched on New Year's Day, 1760, as *The British Magazine, or Monthly Repository*. Within twelve days of Smollett's magazine, Newbery, the prosperous St. Paul's bookseller, started his daily *Public Ledger*, for which Goldsmith's services were similarly secured at the rate of a guinea per article. It was for this paper that he made his first great hit with "The Chinese Letters," as they soon came to be called, describing the reflections contained in letters of a Chinese philosopher resident in London to his friends at home. Ninety-eight letters appeared in all and contributed more than anything else to the success of *The Ledger*.¹ The idea of the letters was borrowed from the *Lettres Persanes* of Montesquieu and such collections as *The Turkish Spy*, but the beautiful facility of their style and humour makes them very characteristic of Goldsmith. Their success rendered Goldsmith indispensable to Newbery, who financed the essayist henceforth upon terms which were perhaps on the whole beneficial to both. Goldsmith moved his lodgings from Green Arbour to Wine Office Court, where

¹ Even more famous in the estimation of posterity have proved the essays he wrote for Smollett, including the best essay written in English before 1820—to wit, the *Reverie at the Boar's Head Tavern, East Cheap*. Both Lamb and Washington Irving frankly confessed their obligations to Goldsmith. The author's preface to these collected essays is a masterpiece of genial humour.



After the Painting by a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Oliver Goldsmith

Newbery had him under command for all kinds of miscellaneous work and paid him at the rate of not much less than £4 a week. In 1762 Newbery published the "Citizen of the World" letters in a completed form, giving the author 5 guineas for the new copyright. In the same year Goldsmith went to Bath, bringing back materials for his *Life of Beau Nash*. He was already apparently known to Dr. Johnson, by whom he was introduced to Reynolds, and Goldsmith now removed from the City to board with Mrs. Fleming at £50 a year in the then pleasantly suburban neighbourhood of Canonbury. From 1764 Goldsmith was a regular attendant at the club which met at the Turk's Head in Gerrard Street, at which he with Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, Langton, Beauclerk, and Sir John Hawkins were original members, and to the same year belongs the famous story of the sale of the manuscript of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and his rescue from the clutches of the wrathful Mrs. Fleming through the intervention of Johnson. At the very time of Goldsmith's arrest not only *The Vicar of Wakefield* but also a poem called *The Traveller* lay completed in the poet's desk. This poem was published by Newbery at one and sixpence on December 19th, 1764. Its smooth and carefully elaborated couplets won the hearty applause of the town and the just comment that the poem had had no equal since the death of Pope.¹ The author had done now with Islington and Mrs. Fleming. He moved to the Temple and took advantage of his new popularity to collect his essays from *The Bee* and other periodicals. His price was rapidly going up in the market, as we may judge from the fact that Newbery paid him £60 for a *Survey of Experimental Philosophy*, and no less than £200 for some red-pencil work upon the beauties of English poetry. In a very different category from all this task-work was the exquisite novel which Goldsmith had cherished from its conception and upon the workmanship of which he had lavished all the treasures of his skill. During the whole of 1765 this masterpiece had lain neglected in Newbery's shop. On March 27th, 1766, or fifteen months after

The Traveller had appeared, was published, at six shillings bound or five shillings sewed, "*The Vicar of Wakefield*, a Tale, supposed to be written by Himself; printed for F. Newbery at the Crown in Paternoster Row." Several minute circumstances show that the book was largely written in 1762, though not completed until two years later. Burke stood almost alone among the connoisseurs of the time in according a high rank to this Prince Charming among works of prose fiction, though its popularity among the public was great from the first. But none of the work that he did for posterity seemed to pay, and to support his rapidly increasing expenses Goldsmith had to pull hard at the compiler's oar for the publishers with whom his name was a steadily improving asset. In addition to Roman and English histories he was set to work upon a large natural history, which was eventually called *Animated Nature*, in which he described how monkeys caught crabs by baiting their tails and drawing their prey from the water by means of a violent jerk. If his paymasters had but allowed, he would have surpassed himself in a companion work on the vegetable and fossil creation. All this hack-work derives whatever merit it possesses from the inalienable charm of Goldsmith's style. Fortunately he found some intervals for more permanent work, and in the retirement of the turret of Canonbury House during the spring of 1767 he composed his comedy, *The Good-Natured Man*. The piece was refused by Garrick at Drury Lane, but was taken by Coleman of Covent Garden and produced at the end of January, 1768. Goldsmith's friends attended in force and the play was a success, though Goldsmith's vanity was hurt by the lack of cordiality shown by a public which reserved its enthusiasm for a rival comedy, the *False Delicacy* of Hugh Kelly. The happy author got £500, and it is now that we hear of Mr. Filby's great creation of a poet's Tyrian bloom-coloured coat, and of ugly Noll's dancing on the table and throwing his wig about at supper-parties in the Temple, while the unhappy Blackstone groaned below over the proof-sheets of the *Commentaries*.

¹ As in the "Moral Essays" of Pope it is the beauty and perfection of individual lines that take the reader by storm: descriptions of France and the French character such as that beginning:

Gay, sprightly land of mirth and social ease,
Pleased with thyself whom all the world can please;

or the wonderful delineation of Holland from

Where the broad ocean leans against the land.

The next triumph of Goldsmith's genius was *The Deserted Village*, published May 26th, 1770, the result of much labour, and a poetical exercise so perfect in its kind that it elicited from the reluctant Gray the sentence, "This man is a poet." The success of the poem was instant and decisive, and five editions followed each other in as many months. For the 430 verses in the poem he is said to have been paid at the rate of ten shillings a couplet. The success largely added to Goldsmith's social importance and to the frequency of his engagements in Leicester Square, Vauxhall, Bath, and such haunts of the *beau monde*. Periodically, however, he retired to a farm near the sixth milestone on the Edgware road for uninterrupted work. There during 1771 he wrote his delightful comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and there probably, after returning from a visit to Lord Clare at Bath in 1771, he threw off that wittiest and most festive of poetical epistles to his late host commencing:

Thanks, my lord, for your venison, for finer or fatter
Never ranged in a forest, or smoked in a platter.

The comedy was submitted to Coleman early in 1772, but the manager dallied with it a whole year before he could conquer his misgiving as to the fate of a comedy which was so broadly humorous and laughable. Johnson, to whom the play was inscribed, presided over a large muster of the poet's friends, and led the applause from the front row in the side box. The play was received with hearty shouts of laughter and applause; as Johnson said, it answered the great end of comedy, making an audience merry. Coleman was dumfounded, and the refined school, as represented by Horace Walpole, had to admit a prodigious success. It must have brought in Goldsmith £600, or possibly more. But his finances were past such remedy. He had raised money and squandered it by every artifice of acquisition and folly of expense. He suffered the torments known only to those who accept payment in advance for work that they have not done. He had cherished the hope of retrieving his position by means of a large scheme for a popular dictionary of arts and sciences; but the booksellers had now, we are told, such acquaintance of his indolence of temper and methods of procrastination that they ultimately fought shy of the project. His alternative plans included abridgments of his former works, translations from Scarron, a

new edition of his *Inquiry*, and similar tasks. In the meantime, he followed up his previous happy attempts at occasional verse by his masterly *Retaliation*, in answer to some mock epitaphs composed by Garrick and others at a dinner-party of his acquaintances at the St. James's Coffee-house. Poor Goldsmith's own epitaph was the first to be needed. In the middle of March, 1774, he returned from his country retreat feeling far from well. On March 25th he was too ill to attend the club, and, in spite of the protests of the doctors summoned, insisted on dosing himself with James's powders, the fashionable febrifuge of the period. On April 3rd he obtained the long-desired sleep, and it was thought that his malady had taken a turn for the better; but next morning he woke up in convulsions, sank rapidly, and died before five in the morning, being then forty-five and a half years old.

When Burke was told of his death he burst into tears; Reynolds gave over painting for the day; Johnson was no less deeply affected. "Sir Joshua is of opinion," says Johnson, "that he owed not less than £2,000." Was ever poet so trusted before? In the circumstances the public funeral proposed was abandoned, and he was buried on April 9th in the burial-ground of the Temple Church, where a flat stone was placed to mark his grave in 1874. A monument was erected in Westminster Abbey over the south door in Poets' Corner at the expense of the Club.

Goldsmith had neither the gift of knowledge nor the power of research. As an essayist and poet, he has neither extended views nor originality; as a critic upon the few occasions upon which he embarks on criticism, his sympathies are of the most restricted kind. Of Shakespeare and Milton he knew very little, and cared less. His interest in poetry commenced with Dryden and ended with Pope; while in prose his great models were Addison and Voltaire. His own success as a writer was due to an instinctive good taste in style, which led him unerringly to the perfection of clearness, simplicity, and easy graceful fluency. The same qualities are visible alike in essays, poems, novels, and plays. The ideas are not even those of his own day. They are those of a Tory squire of the reign of Queen Anne, of a close relative of Sir Roger De Coverley; but they are adorned at every turn by a genial air of Bohemian reminiscence, by a twinkle of boyish humour, and by a delicate and most rare

gift for perceiving and expressing with the most wonderful idealising touch all that is most actual and most commonplace. It is hardly an exaggeration to say in fact that, with the exception of a few pictures drawn from his early life and experience, all Goldsmith's themes are trite and commonplace in the extreme. Had his notes and materials been worked up by any other hand, they would have been quite worthless. Goldsmith's playful and delicate touch alone could transform every thought that he handled into something radiant with warmth and fragrant with a perfume all its own. The incoherence of his life seems completely reversed in the beautiful coherence of his writings.

Goldsmith's essays and plays are a delightful compound of fun and felicity and happy unconscious art upon a background of tavern stories and droll experiences of his callow hobbledehoyhood in Ireland; and we have the same qualities joined to a more exquisite sensibility in what is, after all, his great masterpiece, the inimitable *Vicar of Wakefield*—one of the greatest compliments to human nature that an Englishman has ever produced. The excellences of this work, like that of most others by this author, are of the episodic kind, and seem injured rather than enhanced by the operation of the intrigue; but the earlier chapters, as Macaulay says in his most bland appreciation, have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his gross of green spectacles, the vicar and his monogamy, the sharper and his cosmogony, the picture too big to be got out of the kitchen, the squire proving from Aristotle that relatives are related, Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the great pseudo-ladies with their scandal about Sir Tomkyn's amours, and Mr. Burchell with his "Fudge," have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning. As we approach the catastrophe the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer. Yet we read *The Vicar of Wakefield* in youth and in age. We return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature.

As a man of letters Sheridan is hardly

worthy to associate with Goldsmith. He had none of Goldy's artless humanity or spontaneous humour; but that he wrote the best comedies we have had since "the matchless Congreve" is still, we believe, undisputed. Like Goldsmith himself, and Foote, and Oscar Wilde, and Charles Lever, whose novels are a tissue of farces, Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan was a true scion of Anglo-Irish sires. Ability and buoyancy, thriftlessness and improvidence, seemed singularly balanced in his composition. His grandfather united improvidence and wit strangely in electing to preach at Cork upon the solemn occasion of George I.'s birthday from the text "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"! His father was the rival lexicographer and "preternaturally dull" contemporary of Dr. Johnson. "When they give him a pension," said Ursa Major, "it is time for me to give up mine." Born at 12, Dorset Street, Dublin, on October 30th, 1751 (the year of *Amelia*, *Pickle*, and Gray's *Elegy*), Richard, at first and at Harrow, seemed likely to prove "preternaturally dull"; but at twenty-two he was clever enough to walk off with the belle of the Bath season, and with her a dot of £3,000 provided by the sentimental tenderness of a baffled elderly admirer. Sheridan invested the money in a West-End house and entertainments worthy of his sparkling talent for conversation, and in January, 1775, his precocity of wit was amply vindicated by the triumphant success at Covent Garden of his first comedy, *The Rivals*. The rivals are one and the same person. The gallant young lover has introduced himself to the romantic heroine in the character of Ensign Beverley, a poor young subaltern, in preference to his own more eligible personality as the heir of Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet with £4,000 a year, and has gained the heart of the sentimental Lydia, who prefers love in a cottage to the finest settlements, and looks forward to an elopement and the loss of a great part of her fortune with delight; but the young man's plans are confounded by the sudden arrival upon the scene of his father, bent upon marrying him forthwith in his own person to the aforesaid Lydia. Thus he is at the same time in her eyes the romantic and adored Beverley and the detested Captain Absolute, the wealthy suitor to whom she has been bartered by her guardians. Such is the airy complication upon which this famous comedy is hung.

Sheridan had no truck with the dramatic theories of his day, and from the artistic or constructive side his work is a mere réchauffé of Vanbrugh, with numerous hints from the novelists, especially the author of *Humphry Clinker*. But in such a play as *The Rivals* what matters is the ingenious dialogue and the highly perfected wit that it enshrines.

Sir Anthony Absolute. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Malaprop. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anthony. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!—and depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

Mrs. Malaprop. Fy, fy, Sir Anthony!—you surely speak laconically.

Sir Anthony. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

Mrs. Malaprop. Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or algebra, or simony, or fluxions, or paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments.—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sheridan's next attempts at farce and comic opera in *St. Patrick's Day*, or *The Scheming Lieutenant*, and *The Duenna* have nothing very particular to recommend them beyond a few songs; but with *The School for Scandal* it is far otherwise. The comedy is Sheridan's own incomparably successful repartee to the saying that he was afraid of himself. It is undoubtedly Sheridan at his highest power. The plot is not pre-eminently original and the characters are certainly overdrawn. Lady Sneerwell sneers a little too much, Joseph

Surface is a little too sleek, Uncle Oliver a little too avuncular, and Charles Surface a little too breezy for life; but the characters and situations are perfect for the stage. Sheridan's comedy is the acme of artificial comedy, and artificial comedy has always been a law unto itself. Observe merely that the dialogue which was so desperately hard to write is the most delightfully easy to read in the whole range of modern drama.

The most humorous and spontaneous thing that ever Sheridan wrote, by far, is *The Critic*, given at Drury Lane in October, 1779, two and a half years after *The School*. The burlesque includes an amazing caricature of a contemporary (Sir Fretful Plagiary = Richard Cumberland) and it is full of transient local allusions. For all that, it remains one of the most universally laughable compositions that has ever been penned in any language. Much more truly than when Garrick died it might now be observed that when the author of *The Critic* gave up playwriting the "gaiety of nations was eclipsed."

For all his apparent laziness and carelessness, "Sherry" was in reality a very ambitious man. With the aid of resources as mysterious as those of Burke he bought the patent of Drury Lane Theatre, and when this proved itself unlikely to make his fortune or to relieve even the more urgent cases of distress among his creditors, the mercurial manager decided upon a political career. Fox had once said that he was the wittiest man he had ever known: so upon Fox should rest the responsibility of his political partisanship. Repulsion to Pitt made him more than ever a devoted Foxite. Like much of his dramatic composition, his most famous oratory, notably "the great Begum speech," smells rather too much of the lamp. And yet his wit was by no means always laboured. Take, for instance, his remark about his stomach digesting in its waistcoat, his great unquotable repartee to the Regent, his aspiration after the lost tribes of Israel, the pleasantry on Rose when he christened his son William Pitt ("a rose by any other name would smell as sweet"), his quip to Mrs. Cholmondeley when she asked him for an acrostic on her name, "It would be so long that I should have to divide it into cantos," or the story of how he hiccupped out the name of "Wilberforce" when picked nine-tenths intoxicated out of the gutter—these things point surely to no very patent obtuseness or

undue deliberation in the exercise of the impromptu faculty.

The dramatist is admirably representative of a certain social *milieu*. He lived in the brightest set in an era of witty talkers. Everywhere he went he came under the sparkle of wit. Some of it may be tinsel, perhaps, but it all looked very well under the lights. His plays represent the sparkle of this brilliant crowd. He has no knowledge of the heart worth speaking about; but he catches the trick of phrase or the foible of thought and manner and represents it in an instant. During the whole of his brilliant career Sheridan

had exercised a seemingly occult power over his creditors, and the first premonition that he received of a decline of this wonderful faculty was doubtless largely responsible for his death on July 7th, 1816. His epitaph may be found in the genial sentences of Byron: "Poor Brinsley! He has written the best comedy, the best farce, the best address, the best oration. . . . I have more than once heard him say that he never had a shilling of his own. To be sure he contrived to extract a good many of other people's. . . . He could soften the heart of an attorney. There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus!"¹

FROM Sheridan the English drama of the kind that combines literary excellence with stage efficiency makes a leap from 1779 to 1892, when *Lady Windermere's Fan*, by Oscar Wilde (1856—1900), was produced at the St. James's Theatre. Wilde's later plays, such as *A Woman of No Importance* and *The Importance of being Earnest* (1895), exhibit the quintessence of playful artifice, irresponsible persiflage, and antiquarian wit—skilfully modernised. In these airy productions he was as imitative, as conventional, as heartless, as clever, and almost as successful as "Sherry" himself. Wilde was a most humane and kindly dispositioned man, and depraved though he was in his private life, his cynicism was probably not much more than skin deep. The Germans have taken his Art for Art theories seriously and have produced and criticised his *Salome* and other paradoxically intense but insincere æsthetic products with amazing gravity. Superior in our opinion is the work of Arthur Wing Pinero, the most considerable of the playable playwrights, who are at the same time literary, of our generation. His first play, *The Money Spinner*, was given at the St. James's in January, 1881, and since then he has produced no less than thirty farces, light comedies, and dramas, among the latter *The Profligate*, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*, *The Gay Lord Ques*, *Iris*, *Letty*, and *His House in Order* (1906). Of these, in our opinion *Iris* and *Letty* are the best. No dramatist has ever made a more triumphant progress from mediocrity to mastery than Pinero. Not too old to learn new stagecraft from the younger Dumas and Ibsen, a most careful workman, skilful in character-drawing and a perfect adept in every kind of technical resource, his work has continued to be marred chiefly by two influences—an undue glare from the footlights, and an undue echo from the cheap press of the day, which has made itself felt too often in his dialogue. With all its defects, however, his work as a whole is probably the most satisfying that we have produced in this country since the time of Vanbrugh; and his influence is seen strongly in the work, for instance, of the most promising of our younger dramatists, Granville Barker, author of *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905). More ingenious but less interesting in the main, because less sincere, is the modern morality drama of J. M. Barrie and G. Bernard Shaw. Adapting himself deliberately to the requirements of a frivolous generation, Mr. Shaw, who is unrivalled in cleverness among the writers of his epoch, has adopted epigram, conveyed through the medium of dialogue (and monologue), as his instrument for preaching the bankruptcy of our present social system and the necessity of its being mended or ended without delay. People who only want to be amused are apt to say that the epigrams are excellent, but the teaching fustian, whereas those whose aim in life extends beyond being amused are inclined with manifest unfairness to say just the reverse. Yet when all is said it seems to us that there have been few writers of such first-rate ability as Mr. Shaw who have worked so hard to be amusing with so little promise of permanent result.

¹ Goldsmith's works have been edited by Percy (1801), Washington Irving (1825), Prior (1837), Peter Cunningham (1854), Masson (1868),* J. W. M. Gibbs (1889). The *Poems* have been edited by Bolton Corney in 1846, also by Dobson, Langbridge, Woodward, and many others. See Birkbeck Hill's *Writers and Readers*, *The Age of Johnson*, Millar's *Mid-Eighteenth Century*, and the *Lives* by Johnson, Macaulay, Sir James Prior, John Forster, 1848* (abridged by R. Ingpen, 1903), and William Black. There are no good books on Sheridan.

CHAPTER IX

WILLIAM COWPER AND GEORGE CRABBE

"He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken;
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken."

MRS. BROWNING'S *Cowper's Grave*

The Life of Cowper—Early Writings—*The Task*—An Unrivalled Letter-writer—George Crabbe—"Nature's sternest Painter, yet the best."

WILLIAM COWPER, one of the foremost of English letter-writers and the greatest master of English verse between the death of Pope and the rise of the illustrious group headed by Wordsworth, was born at Great Berkhamstead in November, 1731. He was the son of the rector of that place, a chaplain of George II., and nephew of the distinguished Lord Chancellor, Earl Cowper. His mother was one of the Donnes of Ludham in Norfolk. A portrait of her was given to the poet by one of her relatives, Mrs. Bodham, in February, 1790, whereupon he wrote that famous piece, *On Receipt of my Mother's Picture*—with tears he wrote it and without tears few can read it. At the private school of Dr. Pitman at Market Street, Cowper was cruelly bullied. "I well remember," he relates of his particular tyrant, "being afraid to lift my eyes upon him higher than his knees, and I knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress." At ten he was placed at Westminster, where he was much happier, where "slovenly, dirty, good-natured" Vinny Bourne was his usher, and Warren Hastings, Cumberland, Churchill, Lloyd, Bentley, and Colman were among his school-fellows. With the three last, Bonnell Thornton and Hill, he afterwards joined in the verbal saturnalia of the Nonsense Club, and the phrase-capping encounters of its members can hardly have failed to aid Cowper in acquiring that masterly dexterity in "refractory rhyming" which is so distinctive of his work. He left school in 1748 and went to reside next year as an articulated pupil with a London solicitor, his

fellow-clerk being Edward Thurlow, who jestingly promised to provide for him when he was Lord Chancellor. During the next four years, apart from a few cheap essays for the magazines and a little verse translation, he did practically *nothing*; he was in a chronic state of idleness, indigestion, and intense restlessness, which prevented him from any steady application, though he read over and over again his favourite Latin and Greek poets, and enlarged his acquaintance among the English poets. In 1753 occurred another crisis of melancholia, during the intensity of which his one solace was George Herbert. He was finally cured by a change of scene and the lively society of his cousin Harriet, afterwards Lady Hesketh. Early in 1754 he was called to the Bar. He moved from the Middle to the Inner Temple, where he bought rooms in 1759, but he had no intention of practising and resigned himself wholly to the amusements of literature and the lighter frivolities of a cultivated man about town. He was disappointed in an attachment which he had formed for Harriet's younger sister, Theodora, his uncle, Ashley Cooper, refusing to sanction the marriage of the cousins, but he took the blow very calmly and went on dissipating his small patrimony, leading an idle and agreeable life and persistently ignoring the desirability of settling down or earning a living. These twelve irresponsible years must evidently have been of the greatest importance in the formation of Cowper's poetical character.

In the summer of 1762, when he had broken into his last hundred pounds, he first began to feel really nervous about his worldly prospects.

His influential relatives were alive to the necessity of making some provision for him at the public expense, and they succeeded in getting him a nomination to the post of clerk of the journals of the House of Lords; but the ordeal of qualifying by public examination proved more than his nervous and diffident spirit could stand, and he became for a season absolutely demented. After futile attempts at suicide, the sequel of a return in redoubled force of morbid images to his mind, he was placed under the sympathetic Dr. Cotton at a private asylum at St. Albans, whence he emerged after eighteen months' sojourn, in June, 1765, for the time at least completely cured. His resignation of a small post which he held (that of Commissioner of Bankrupts) left him almost without resources, but his relatives clubbed together and provided him with a subsistence allowance. His recovery was accompanied by a profound conviction of the solemnity of religion and of the healing power of Christ. A conviction of past errors led him to break entirely with his former life. His brother, John Cowper, a fellow of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, whom he dearly loved, settled him at Huntingdon. At Huntingdon he made the acquaintance of a clergyman and ex-schoolmaster, who took pupils in the town, the Rev. Morley Unwin, his wife Mary, and his son and daughter. From the first they treated him like a near relation, and he was so fascinated by their society, especially that of Mrs. Unwin and her son William, that he became after a short interval an inmate of their house, to the expense of which he contributed at a moderate rate. In July, 1767, Morley Unwin met with his death from a horse accident, and thereupon Mrs. Unwin and Cowper, towards whom her behaviour had always been that of a mother towards her son, resolved to leave Huntingdon to remove to some place where they would be under an Evangelical minister of the gospel. Whilst undecided where to go, a visitor arrived in the person of the Rev. John Newton, a famous Evangelical preacher, who had been requested to call on them by Dr. Conyers, a Cambridge friend of young Unwin. They were greatly impressed by his goodness and decided to go and live in his immediate neighbourhood at Olney in Buckinghamshire. Newton became Cowper's spiritual director. His history as a poet

commences at Olney, but not until some thirteen years elapsed and he was close upon fifty. The damp climate of Olney and the strain of the pastoral work undertaken for Newton¹ brought on a very serious recurrence of his malady in 1773. He was overwhelmed by a melancholy of the deepest dye, and imagined that his friends were in a conspiracy against him, and that the avenger of blood was pursuing him. As in the case of Bunyan and the early Puritans, his terror, tinged by religious mania, made him think that he was eternally damned. Nor did he ever completely purge himself of the delusion that some mysterious causes had made him the object of the irrevocable hatred of his Creator. Recovery in this instance was protracted and tedious; but for the maternal care of Mrs. Unwin, whom Cowper for a brief instant in 1772 had contemplated marrying, his malady might have proved fatal to him. Religious preoccupation was the one thing necessary for him to avoid. What he wanted was light amusing occupation of a not too absorbing kind.

For three years his faculties were unequal to the production of an ordinary letter, but in May, 1776, he managed to resume his correspondence with Joseph Hill, who regulated his pecuniary affairs for him. Previous to this he had amused himself with drawing, gardening, taming leverets, and making wooden boxes and bird-cages. Now his correspondence engaged more and more of his attention, and gradually induced a happier and more active frame of mind. In his letters addressed mainly to Hill, William Unwin, his cousin Lady Hesketh, and later to his bookseller and Hayley, he avoids the deep wounds which religious gloom had inflicted, and reveals himself again, rather on the bright, clever, affectionate, and merry side.

He wrote letters and, later on, verse for the same reason that he painted or planed—namely, to occupy himself and distract his mind. He begged his correspondents to burn his letters, and had no idea of their being carefully preserved. This is one of the reasons of their charm. His letters were not and have not the air of being deliberately composed for "circulation"; yet in point of fact they are as elegant and classic as the most finished compositions. "His humour, like his style, is spontaneous and delightful, and imparts a flavour to an infinity of trifles which in themselves would have been

¹ Newton set him to write hymns which are at times the embodiment of despair.

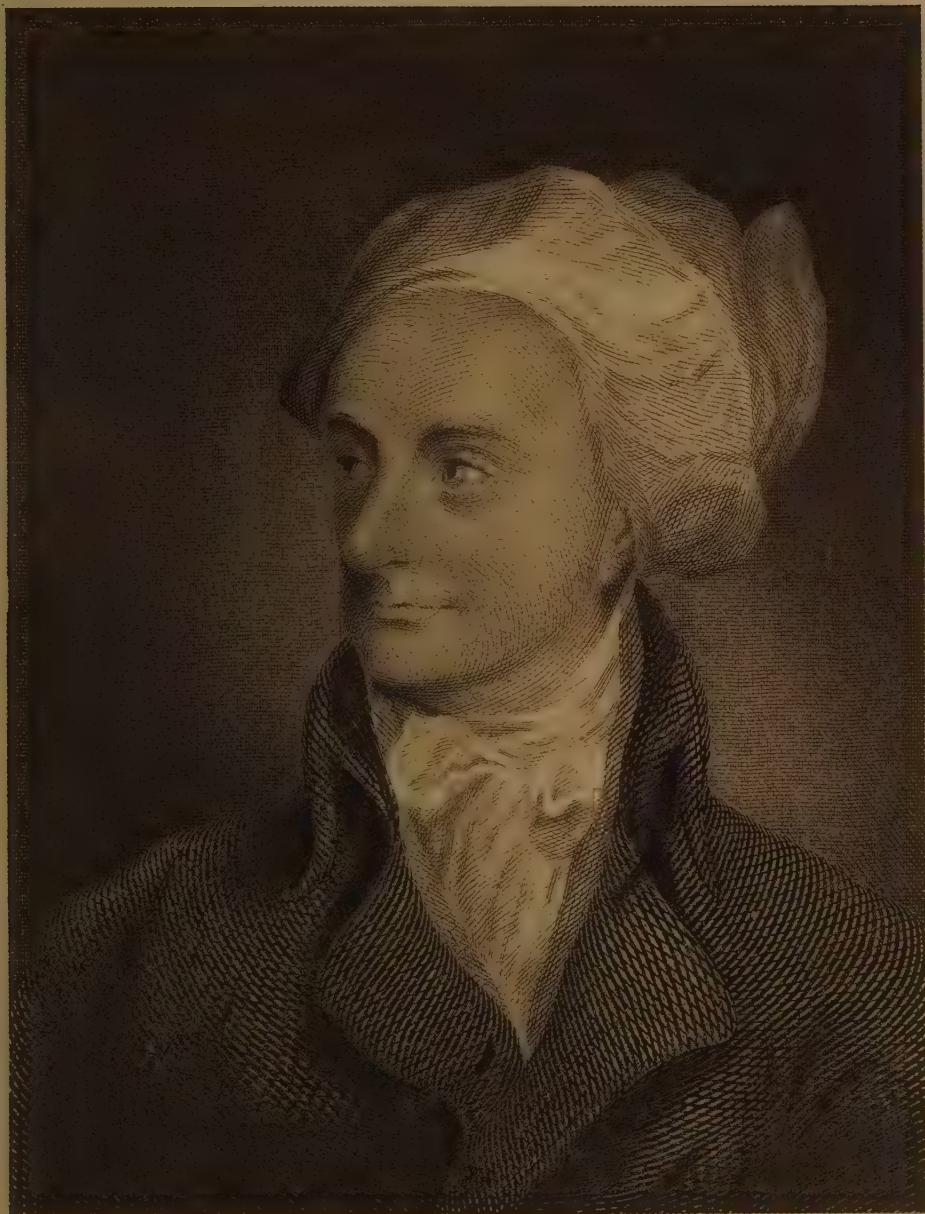
insipid. He never exaggerates for the sake of effect. Every word bears the impress of truth." Conciseness, naturally, is of no moment with him, nor does he deal much in opinions and criticisms. He confines himself mainly to the little incidents and feelings of the hour, and these he tells with a charm and distinctness unequalled in any other familiar correspondence. They present to us, with a vividness to which Madame de Sevigné alone can approach, the mind of the writer in his everyday dress environed by the trivial accidents of everyday life, and it is for this reason that, while recognising their inferiority as sources of entertainment to the letters of Walpole or Lamb, we are emboldened to describe their writer as the foremost of English letter-writers.

In the summer of 1781 Lady Austen was staying with her sister, Mrs. Jones, the wife of a clergyman, near Olney. The poet was on visiting terms with the Joneses, and chancing to see Lady Austen in their company when he was looking out of his window, he was so struck with her appearance that he sent Mrs. Unwin to invite the party to tea. His first impression was confirmed. He was perfectly charmed with "Sister Anne," as he soon began to call this new acquaintance. She was a woman of great vivacity, quick sensibilities, and keen appreciation of literature. Once admitted into the inner circle of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin, her lively spirits drove away his spirit of melancholy. Cowper wrote songs which she set to music and sung to the harpsichord. One evening in October, 1782,¹ when he seemed depressed, she told him the story of John Gilpin, as her nurse had related it to her. Next morning at breakfast he read them the legend in the form of a ballad. In November it appeared in *The Public Advertiser*. A well-known popular reciter (Henderson) saw its possibilities; it became town talk, the general favourite it has ever since remained. Cowper's ordinary humour is less broad, but in *Gilpin* he lets himself go, and the verses seem an echo of the peals of laughter that were heard issuing from his bedroom on the night of its composition. He was urged to write a sequel, and wisely abstained. But Lady Austen was an especial admirer of blank verse. Cowper shared her sentiment, and promised to write something in it if she would furnish the subject. "Oh, you can

never be in want of a subject," said Lady Austen, "you can write upon anything; write upon this sofa." This was in the summer of 1783, and fifteen months later *The Task* was in the hands of the printer. It was published in 1785, along with *Tirocinium* (a poem in rhyming decasyllabics on the dangers and abuses of public schools), and proved immediately successful. In his first volume of *Poems* Cowper had made his confession of faith; in *The Task*, commencing with mock heroics upon the set theme of the sofa, he was led on to depict and delineate with frequent illustrations the full round and tenor of his every-day life at Olney, and "the thoughts of a tender, tranquil, contemplative mind which sympathises with everything that is good, lovely, wise, and merciful." The didactic framework is subordinate to the picture—an almost unrivalled series of landscapes, earth-moods, and interiors. The beauties of these are of the tranquil and not the exciting kind, and the exquisiteness of the workmanship is easily overlooked by hasty eyes. As with other works of consummate excellence, the impression of the greatness of this increases with prolonged acquaintance.

Unfortunately, a slight misunderstanding on Lady Austen's part gave rise to an apprehension that she might be preparing for herself the rôle of Vanessa; and a tension with Mrs. Unwin was, in all probability, the immediate cause of Cowper's severing the tie with his Egeria. A successor and partial substitute was happily found in the person of his cousin, Lady Hesketh, the Stella of the poet's declining years, with whom he had reopened relations in October, 1785. Through her beneficent intervention, the lodge in the neighbouring park of Weston, belonging to the friendly family of the Throckmortons, was furnished for Cowper and Mrs. Unwin in the autumn of 1786, and this proved on the whole an advantageous change from the old house in Olney. With the completion of *The Task* the poet found his stock of original experience exhausted, but he was drawn by a happy inspiration to undertake a blank-verse translation of Homer, the elaboration and revision of which proved the solace and distraction of his later years down to 1791, when it was published. In the same year Mrs. Unwin's health began to decline, and his own dejection tended more and more to

¹ His first volume of *Poems*, containing *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, *Retirement*, and shorter pieces, was published early in this year.



After the Painting by Romney.

William Cowper

become chronic. Yet in flashes, lighting up this deplorable gloom, apart from letters that carry with them all the old charm, he produced some exquisite poems, among them the tender, incomparable lament *To Mary* and *Yardley Oak*, a poem with passages of almost Miltonic grandeur and phraseological and metrical skill. In 1793, when Lady Hesketh paid her annual visit to Weston Lodge, she found Mrs. Unwin relapsing into second childhood, and Cowper a despairing prisoner by her bedside. By the spring of 1794 he was living on sopped toast and refusing to open his letters, though one of these contained the offer of a Crown pension of £300.

In 1795 the sufferers were removed to the Norfolk coast; Mary Unwin died at East Dereham on December 17th, 1796. During the winter of 1797-8 Cowper was beguiled into revising his *Homer*; this was completed on March 8th, 1799, and a few days later he wrote *The Castaway*, his final effort, and one of the most powerful, at original composition. The comparison of himself to a swimmer, solitary in a storm-swept ocean, expresses with terrible force the last phase of his unutterable despair. "England's sweetest and most pious bard" (as East Dereham's other celebrity, George Borrow, called him), Cowper passed away in that small township on April 25th, 1800; he was buried in what is now known as the Cowper Chapel of East Dereham Church.

Unrivalled as a letter-writer, Cowper is, perhaps, the greatest of our secondary poets. The ungovernable impulse and imaginative passion of the great masters of poesy it would be scarcely reasonable to claim for him. His motives to express himself in verse came almost exclusively from the outside. The greater part of his poetry is, strictly speaking, of the occasional order. In all the arts that raise the best occasional poetry to the level of greatness Cowper is supreme; in phrase moulding, verbal gymnastic and prosodical marquetry he has scarcely a rival, and the fruits of his poetic industry are enshrined in the filigree of a most

delicate fancy and a highly cultivated intelligence, purified and thrice refined in the fire. His lucidity has the peculiar quality of a great gift concentrated into an interval. In many of his shorter poems the artistic simplicity is indistinguishable from the stern reticence of profound genius.¹

Akin to Cowper as a poet of observation and reflection rather than of the higher imagination (though far inferior to him as regards technique), George Crabbe, who was born within a few years of Pope's death, affords an interesting link between the age of Akenside and the age of Rogers; but it is his peculiar distinction that while he is one of the most concrete of our poets as regards matter, he reverts in manner to the abstract and generalising style of the *Essay on Man*.

George Crabbe was born at the little Suffolk seaport of Aldeburgh on Christmas Eve, 1754. His father was a schoolmaster, then a collector of salt duties, and part owner of a fishing-boat. His boyhood was rendered gloomy by parental quarrels and his father's contempt for his studious tastes; he got some schooling, however, at Aldeburgh, and was apprenticed to a surgeon at Woodbridge. After many hardships, and little or no success in his profession, he determined in April, 1780, to seek his fortune in London, where he arrived with £3 and a few poems in his pocket. He found an insolvent publisher to issue his poem, *The Candidate*. Nothing came of it, and Crabbe was reduced to the last extremity when a chance letter obtained for him the generous patronage of Edmund Burke. Henceforth his lines fell in easy places.

As Burke's guest at Beaconsfield he met such distinguished patrons as Fox, Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, and Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who presented him with £100. In 1781 Dodsley brought out Crabbe's first poem of note, *The Library*, and in December of the same year, by his distinguished friend's advice, he took deacon's orders. In 1782 he was licensed to the curacy of Aldeburgh, which he gladly exchanged in a

¹ Given an ordinary newspaper paragraph about wreck or battle, turn it into the simplest possible language, do not introduce a single metaphor or figure of speech, indulge in none but the most obvious of all reflections—as, for example, that when a man is once drowned he won't win any more battles—and produce as the result a copy of verses which nobody can ever read without instantly knowing them by heart. How Cowper managed to perform such a feat, and why not one poet even in a hundred can manage it, are questions which might lead to some curious critical speculations. The dates of the composition of his minor masterpieces are approximately as follows: *Boadicea*, 1780; *Goldfinch*, 1780; *Adjudged Case*, 1780; *Selkirk*, 1781; *Royal George*, 1782; *Poplars are felled*, 1784; *Needless Alarm*, 1788; *Dog and Water-lily*, 1788; *Yardley Oak* and *Retired Cat*, 1791; *To Mary*, 1793.

few months for the chaplaincy to the Duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle. In 1783 appeared *The Village*, which Dr. Johnson looked over and revised with every symptom of approval. His gloomy views of bucolic life were well adapted to Johnson's own prepossessions. He soon obtained country preferment, and quitted his dependent position at the Duke's mansion, where his earnings had enabled him to marry Sarah Elmy (the "Mira" of his poems), the prudent niece of a wealthy yeoman at Parham, to whom he had been long attached. Two years after his marriage *The Newspaper* appeared, in 1785. During the next twenty years, spent happily enough between his plural livings in Dorset and Suffolk, and his rectory at Muston, in Leicestershire, Crabbe published nothing whatever; but his vein was far from exhausted and his work was resumed in 1807 with greater success and vigour than ever, though with no greater change of manner than if twenty days instead of twenty years of silence had elapsed—a noteworthy contrast to the case of Cowper.

During his productive period he wrote by rule—like Trollope—so many lines a day. Crabbe's later productions were: *The Parish Register* (1807), containing the once famous story of Phœbe Dawson (which afforded solace to Fox when on his death-bed), *The Borough* (1810), and *Tales in Verse* (1812).

When three-score and ten years old he was still busy, amused and interested in life, a good father, a good pastor, and a good neighbour. Jane Austen (of all people) thought he would have made an ideal husband. He died at Trowbridge on February 3rd, 1832, in his seventy-eighth year. His monument in the church has that fine descriptive line of Byron:

This fact in Virtue's name let Crabbe attest,
Though Nature's sternest painter, yet the best.

This last verse and Horace Smith's happy annotation in *Rejected Addresses*, in which he describes Crabbe as a Pope in worsted stockings, contain in germ all the criticism of Crabbe

that is of first-rate value. His devotion to the Popean couplet was undeviating and indiscriminating. We have in Crabbe's slow-moving patchwork of metrical tales the heroic couplet in its most monotonous and soporific form, the cæsura or pause occurring after the fourth syllable with the regularity of clock-work; the rhyming, too, seems mechanical, the rhythm is devoid of interest. He seems perpetually working himself up to a Popean epigram, but he never arrives at the point. Machinery deteriorates with age, and the wheeze and click of the Augustan decasyllable becomes positively distressing in 1819. Yet, even with this worn machinery, it is wonderful what Crabbe effects. Reacting somewhat tardily against pastoral poetry in the same kind of way that George Douglas reacted against the prettiness of the "Kailyard" school, Crabbe describes country life like a coarse-fibred Cowper, whose observatory is not in the garden belvedere but in the market-hall of some exiguous seaport. From this vantage ground he retails his grave-digger's gossip, not of an Auburn or an Eden, but of the Aldeburgh of his cramped and penurious youth; and he is happiest when he is stirring up the outcast dregs of human society, the paupers, the gypsies, the poachers and smugglers, and the luckless honest poor. Writing with a twopenny nail, says Landor, he "scratched rough truths and rogues' facts upon mud walls." The sternness of his realism derives its grandeur from the width of human landscape that his vision embraces. His unit is the span of a man's life, and he regards the world, not by the light of some spring episode in the life of a man, but in its sad and autumn aspect, when the foliage is sere and when things are hastening to decay and death—when early hopes and illusions are faded and the universal lot of man is seen in its bare deformity. Like a weather-beaten veteran returning to his native village, he elicits a long enumeration of tragedies, mischances, brutalities, and failures; these he narrates with a sincerity as bleak as that of the east wind on his own east coast.¹

¹ There are collective editions of Cowper by Wm. Hayley (4 vols., 1803-6), Jn. Johnson (3 vols., 1815), Robert Southey* (15 vols., 1835-7), Robert Bell, Jn. Bruce, Canon Benham, H. S. Milford, and J. C. Bailey* (the last five, of the *Poems* only). The *Early Poems* were specially edited by James Croft in 1825. There is a very handsome and complete chronological edition in the *Letters* by Th. Wright (4 vols., 1904). There are interesting studies by Sainte-Beuve, Stopford Brooke, Stephen (*Hours in a Library*), and Bagehot. An elaborate edition of Crabbe was issued in 8 vols. with very fine plates in 1834, when George Crabbe's pious and sincere Memoir of his father (corrected by "Little Grange" FitzGerald) also appeared. A one-volume edition appeared in 1860. There are also Memoirs by T. E. Kebbel, Anthony Deane (Selections in Little Library), and Canon Ainger. Celebrations were held at Olney and Aldeburgh in 1900 and 1905 (see *Times*, September 15th, 1905).

CHAPTER X

POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, NATURE, AND RELIGION

"Think of the common man's tiresome details of the weather which he has known in past years, and then recollect Gilbert White's account of his great frosts, his hot summers and his thunderstorms. . . . Selborne was to him a kind of Robinson Crusoe's island, which comprehended within itself all his daily interest. . . . It is an element in the rustic charm of the *History* that White's attention was perpetually fixed upon one narrow spot of English ground. His mind was a lens exquisite in definition, but of small field. . . . There is a genius in the book . . . a small thing perfectly done."—L. C. MIALL.

Edmund Burke—Junius—Tom Paine—William Cobbett—Adam Smith—Gilbert White—Natural history—
The open-air school—The attack and defence of ancient creeds and philosophies—Shaftesbury—
Berkeley—Butler—Paley—Watson.

I

THERE is, as has been remarked, a certain unwillingness in the world to admit that the same man has excelled in various pursuits. Yet we find Erskine and Thurlow admitting that Burke had a profound knowledge of jurisprudence, and when Adam Smith came to London he was amazed to find to what extent Burke, by sheer force of deductive reasoning, had anticipated his own carefully constructed economic hypotheses.

Born in January, 1729, the son of a solicitor in Dublin, Edmund Burke was educated at Ballitore School under Abraham Shackleton, to whom he always professed deep obligations. The Shackletons in the days of his prosperity contributed to the "tail of Irish Paddies" which Burke's Whig friends made fun of. In 1743 he became a student at Trinity College, Dublin, and in April, 1747, was entered at the Middle Temple, though he did not actually settle in London until 1750. Indifferent to law, he surrendered himself to a state of *disponibilité universelle*. He filled up his time by frequenting the theatre, studying logic and natural philosophy, and writing poetry. In 1751-3 he made instructive tours through England. The first literary production of Burke's that is preserved is his travesty¹ or *reductio ad absurdum* of Bolingbroke's plan for throwing ridicule upon established religion. "Show me," he says in his *Vindication of Natural Society* (1756), "one absurdity in religion and I will undertake to show you a hundred in political

institutions and laws." In his next essay, *The Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Burke makes the first independent contribution in English to the treatment of æsthetics as a branch of philosophy, and crude though it was in many respects, his work stimulated its German translator Lessing in his great contribution to æsthetic thought, *The Laokoon* of 1766.

In 1759, under the auspices of the bookseller Dodsley, Burke began a yearly chronicle of events under the title of *The Annual Register*. He had already contributed chapters to an historical survey of our American Colonies, and had projected a History of England upon a liberal scale. In 1761 the marvellous aptitude which Burke had manifested as an orator and political thinker (in books and debating societies, mainly, hitherto) led to his appointment as secretary and brain commissary of that somewhat empty-headed politician known as Single-Speech Hamilton. Hamilton was egotistic and exacting. In return for £300 a year he wanted to absorb the whole time and talent of Burke. This was resented, and the connection was broken. Burke was now thirty-seven years of age, with a wife and child, but with no employment or means of income, for his pride had led him to resign an Irish pension. In a very short time, however, he obtained employment as private secretary to Rockingham, upon that statesman's taking office in 1765, and next

¹ Bolingbroke's style is copied very closely.

year he entered Parliament for Wendover, and at once made his mark as a debater. In 1769, in his *Observations on the Present State of the Nation*, he defended the conduct of the Rockingham Ministry; but it is in his next piece, called *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* (1770), in which he unfolds with an almost Oriental luxuriance of diction and similitude the iniquities of the double cabinet system (by which George III. sought to evade the reality of Parliamentary control), that we first catch the long swell of Burke's rolling periods. In his choice of words and rhythms of a swelling and stately sound, Burke shows his affinities with Dryden, the archpriest of modern English prose; in the wonderful balance of his clauses he shows the effect of a long study of Bolingbroke. But in the architectonics of his prose, in the manner in which he piles up effects and accumulates them by a process of elaborate metaphor and ornament, Burke is absolutely individual and original. Nor does he allow the colouring and decoration, in which his taste always inclined rather to the gorgeous, to overpower the impression of spontaneity. The fiery heat of the original impulse is always discernible as that of a generous nature "pouring out his mind on paper."

Nothing illustrates the prominent traits of Burke's mind better than his discourses on the American War: *Speech on American Taxation* (April, 1774), *Speech on Conciliation with America* (March, 1775), and *Letters to the Sheriffs of Bristol* (April, 1777)—here more clearly than elsewhere we perceive Burke's profound knowledge, unbiassed judgment, far-seeing sagacity, and rooted abhorrence of *abstract politics*. He is never tired of flinging his contempt at general maxims, abstruse points, and metaphysical subtleties. He has no patience with doctrinaire politicians who would prefer to see a country ruined rather than give up some pet theory they had fostered within the walls of their libraries. How impotent his eloquence was to mitigate the unfortunate policy of George III. and his Government, with the majority of English people at their back, is known to every one. Burke had the same enlightened views in regard to the government of Ireland, in regard to the English régime in India, and in regard to reform and the reduction of useless offices and extravagantly paid sinecure posts about the Court. In his *Reflections upon the French Revolution* (published

November 1st, 1790), the anger caused by the spectacle of a nation trying to regenerate the present by turning upside down all the institutions which it had inherited from the past influences him to such an extent that his rhetoric loses some of its old suasive force, and Burke occasionally "sees red." But it is not just to refer to his attitude towards the Revolution, and the quarrel in which this attitude involved him with his former associates, as inconsistent with the tenets of his earlier political life and his championship of America. In the best sense of the word, apart from all party significance, Burke was always a Conservative, and the only respect in which his later writings differ from those of earlier date is that they display a mind much more alive than formerly to the dangers of popular illusions, and that they urge with ever-increasing fervour the necessity for those restraining institutions which he always advocated as necessary to the preservation of civilised society.

The *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* was Burke's cogent vindication of himself from the charge of inconsistency with which the Foxites twitted him. The gravity of Burke's indictment against the Revolution and its works ("confronting Jacobinism with all the relentlessness of a Jacobin") had the capital effect of bringing over the waverers of Fox's old party to the side of the Government and the policy of war with France. But events were doing more than words could do to confirm the opinion of Burke's sagacity and foresight. If we realise the impression likely to be made upon the sober and homely English imagination by that heightening of horror by horror, we may easily understand how people came to listen to Burke's voice as the voice of inspiration, and to look on his burning anger as the holy fervour of a prophet of the Lord. Many of his phrases and metaphors ("men of light and leading," the figure of the cattle and the grasshoppers, or the magnificent allusion to the planetary radiance of Marie Antoinette) have entered permanently into the language.

In the meantime Burke, whose needs had always been considerably in advance of his pecuniary resources (eked out by loans from his friends, from repayment of which he was generously released more than once), had been granted a pension of between two and three thousand a year by the King. It had been

settled that he should be Earl of Beaconsfield,¹ and the title would doubtless have been conferred but for the inopportune death of Burke's only son, a terrible blow for the weary statesman, but most devoted and assiduous father. The Duke of Bedford, an embittered and narrow-minded partisan who resented Burke's contribution to the disruption of the old Whig party, had the indecency to assail Burke's pension in the House of Lords. The chief of the house of Russell was the most unfit person in the world to protest against Crown grants! The temptation to pulverise a “booby-duke” proved irresistible to the rhetorician in Burke, and his *Letter to a Noble Lord* (February, 1796) is the most splendid repartee in the English language.² It illustrates the eastern opulence of imagery, displayed in metaphor and simile, which Burke had ever at the disposal of his indignation or his rapture (generally on the hidden beauties and marvels of the British constitution). The historical past was to him an immense storehouse of apposite instances and historical parallels; not dead, but vivified by present experience, practical sagacity, and, above all, a strong constructive imagination. Occasionally his Celtic wealth of fancy got the better of him, his metaphors were confused and his invective became tumultuary; but he was not without the saving grace of humour, that rarest endowment of the perfervid rhetorician. Despite the griefs and disillusionments of his later days it is a delightful picture we conjure up of Burke in his retirement at Beaconsfield,

amid a circle of friends and correspondents, including the best and noblest-minded men of that age.

After Stratford, few shrines in England are more venerable than that at Beaconsfield, where within a few yards of the pyramidal monument of Edmund Waller, and within a few miles only of Milton's cottage at Chalfont and Gray's tomb at Stoke Poges, a monument was erected in 1898 as a memorial of the undying fame of the statesman who died there on July 9th, 1797.

It may be that Burke is comparatively little read, but his thought permeates the whole of the political writing and speculation of the nineteenth century, just as Darwin and Spencer, even when unread, pervade the scientific thought and argument of a later day. In politics he stands for the stability of inherited institutions as moulded and adapted by the habitual usage of a complicated society. In letters he stands for the harmony of sense and sound in English prose. He captivates the senses with the one while he subdues the reason with the other. The volume of both, with the imaginative uplift of his similes and the “combining force” of his intellect, that winds so slowly and majestically into the heart of his subject, carry his readers far above the plains of hum-drum (by which the horizon of press and platform is so ordinarily bounded) into a lofty region from which they can command new and surprising vistas both over the past and into the future.

THE series of seventy letters signed by Junius first appeared in *The Public Advertiser* between January 21st, 1769, and January 21st, 1772. They were revised by the author, and reprinted in March, 1772, in two small volumes, by Henry Sampson Woodfall. A greatly amplified edition, with additional letters (some of which are spurious), was issued in 1812 by George Woodfall. The original letters attracted the universal attention of English politicians, owing to the writer's apparent familiarity with current political topics and personages, and his boldness in commenting upon them. The climax was reached on December 16th, 1769, when Junius, in a letter “to the King,” barbed a most indecent attack by an imputation of personal cowardice, and reminded George III. that the crown “acquired by one revolution” might be “lost by another.” Woodfall was prosecuted for printing and publishing this in *The Public Advertiser*, and acquitted on a technical point, while John Almon, who had issued and sold several reprints of the letters, was punished by fine.

To indicate any express conclusion as to the authorship of the *Junius Letters* would occupy a good deal of

¹ As early as 1768 he had purchased for over £20,000 the estate of Gregories, at Beaconsfield. How he raised the money and how he supported his expenses in this mansion remain somewhat of a mystery.

² The tormentor concludes this rich duke-baiting with a few playfully scornful strokes. “Surely the noble duke must be in a dream. Why, the Crown grants to the house of Russell were so enormous as not only to outrage economy, but even to stagger credibility. The Duke of Bedford is the leviathan among all the creatures of the Crown. He tumbles about his unwieldy bulk; he plays and frolics in the ocean of the royal bounty. Huge as he is, and whilst he ‘lies floating many a rood,’ he is still a creature. His ribs, his fins, his whalebone, his blubber, the very spiracles through which he spouts a torrent of brine against his origin and covers me all over with the spray—everything of him and about him is from the throne. Is it for *him* to question the dispensation of the royal favour?”

space. That space is already enormous. Like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, or the Man in the Iron Mask, the Casket Letters, the Chevalier D'Eon, Hannibal's route over the Alps, or the authorship of *Eikon Basilike* or *The Whole Duty of Man*, the subject has begot a literature to itself, bristling with technicalities and expert opinions. All that seems tolerably certain is that the writer was one of a clique of dissident Whigs—Grenvillites, Wilkites, and doctrinaires—of whom Sir Philip Francis (1740—1818), a scheming politician of the third rank and a most prolific pamphleteer—one of the Rigbys of that generation—was a more or less prominent member. The writer may have been Francis himself, but this is vehemently denied by some of the ablest investigators, such as Charles Wentworth Dilke.

Among the numerous other supposed writers it is sufficient to name Lord Shelburne, Lord Sackville, Chatham, Chesterfield, Horne Tooke, Tom Paine, Edmund Burke, Gibbon, De Lolme, John Wilkes, Charles Lloyd, Hugh Boyd, Barré, the second ("bad") Lord Lyttelton, and Lady Temple.

Our own view is that Francis may have been the literary instrument of the *Letters*, but that they were directly inspired by Richard Grenville, Earl Temple, that maleficent magnate whose obscure alliances and labyrinthine antipathies exactly suit those of the anonymous bludgeoner.

But for the present it is probably best to regard the case as not proven. A great many letters and documents will have to come out of their present repositories before the secret history of the first twenty years of George III.'s reign can be written. In the meantime, the fact that at any moment decisive evidence as to the authorship may come to light accentuates the proverbial danger of prophecy.

The importance of Junius, whether from a political or literary point of view, is not likely to increase. It is, perhaps, to-day no exaggeration to say that it has decreased, is decreasing, yet ought still further to be diminished. Junius, at his best, is no more than a very effective and very unscrupulous leader-writer. He has been termed a plaster image of Burke; but this is a libel—upon the Italian modellers. Bred upon Bolingbroke and Pulteney and Chesterfield (from whom he derived a touch of Gallicism), and Johnson (from whom he caught a few tricks most detrimental to a really good style), he lacked the force of a really great pamphleteer such as Swift; still more did he lack the reach of a political sage like Burke; in finesse he is far beneath Halifax and Chesterfield; while he spurned as beneath him the plain and homely thrust of Defoe, or the violent but delusive quarterstaff of Cobbett. He had only one key—that of studied insult and invective; but invective grows pale as political animosities become first obsolete and then forgotten. What literary merit there is in the invectives of Junius is not sustained by our interest in the personality of the man who launched them, as in the case of Demosthenes or Cicero, or Milton or Burke, or Hood or Hazlitt. The interest of the *Letters* thus tends to become more and more purely historical. The direct literary influence that they wielded over a class of political writers (best seen, perhaps, in the publicists of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* of the early part of last century, of whom Macaulay and Jeffrey are the most brilliant examples) is certainly dwindling, if it be not already extinct. Nor can the fact be regretted. With abundance of hollow declamation and shallow aphorism, the coinage is not altogether deficient in metallic lustre; it is the metal itself that rings false.

Burke and Junius were the two great successors of Bolingbroke in the eighteenth century as political writers. One wrote for his countrymen, the other for his faction; but both alike eschewed abstract political ideals and theories, and sought rather to adapt existing machinery than to model anew. But even empirical England had also its reconstructive theorists, its Jacobins, its physiocrats, and its economic doctrinaires. Conspicuous among these were men such as Horne Tooke (1736—1812), Richard Price (1723—1791) of the "Revolution" Club, whose once-famous sermon "On the Love of our Country" (November 4th, 1789) was the red rag that drew Burke into the controversial arena; James Mackintosh, an able though overworked historian and publicist who answered Burke in *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, but who, like Walpole and many other English admirers of Algernon Sidney, recanted their republicanism when the guns began to shoot; and "Gunpowder Priestley," as he was nicknamed, who vindicated the French Revolution in *Letters to Burke* (January, 1791), and paid for his zeal by having his house in Birmingham burned by a loyalist mob. All these idealists were swallowed up in the vast theoretic superfluous over which extended Jeremy Bentham, who from Priestley's formula, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," evolved a system that was deliberately designed to embrace the whole universe. In the application of this principle Bentham arrived at various conclusions, which he advocated irrespective of the conditions of society in his day and of the laws of social growth, which, indeed, neither he nor his disciples understood. He demanded, in fact, nothing less than the immediate remodelling of the government and the reconstruction of the laws.

The most notorious, if not the most effective, of the intransigents of the time was Thomas Paine, the son of a small farmer at Thetford, in Norfolk, who was born in 1737, served in the navy, was dismissed from the excise, and migrated in 1774 to Philadelphia. Thence in 1776 he issued his short pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*, addressed to the inhabitants of America. Few pamphlets have had a career so triumphant. Written in a trenchant style, and with remarkable vigour and clearness, the brochure explained how America was going to ruin because of her connection with Britain. "Our plan is commerce. What advantage do we derive from the connection? 'Tis time to part"—thus with breathless haste he argues, enforces, and concludes. His *Rights of Man* (1791), in answer to Burke's *Reflections*, exhibits no little controversial skill. There is in Paine's style none of the "rhythmic ocean's roar" which hushes Burke's listeners. But Paine has a clear, practical manner of exposition, and he develops the absurd sides of aristocracy, and monarchy, and primogeniture, and other such archaic institutions, with an acrid cleverness that is by no means wholly contemptible. He was a sincere believer in the efficacy of theories about equality and fraternity. Robespierre pleaded eloquently for the

abolition of the death penalty. Paine, as unscrupulous as William Godwin in many of his private relations, was an enthusiastic humanitarian and philanthropist. After a narrow escape from the guillotine, his last years appear to have been spent under more or less deplorable conditions in America, where he died in June, 1809. His views, like those of not a few anarchists and insurgents, were in many respects progressive and humane; at the same time he identified himself so completely with those whose life was devoted to agitation against constitutional government, and who aimed at the subversion in England of institutions dear to the mass of the people, that he was ostracised, burnt in effigy all over the kingdom, and long regarded as a pariah.

As a champion of popular rights Tom Paine was easily surpassed in the next generation by William Cobbett (1763–1834), probably the most vigorous stump orator and special pleader our language has ever known. Avowedly a disciple of Swift, Cobbett is perhaps the greatest master of what may be called the candid Saxon style—greater than Paine, greater even than Franklin. The son of a labourer, entirely self-taught, a common soldier grafted on a ploughman, Cobbett always knew instinctively how to dominate his environment, and how to produce a sensation of transparent honesty when he was most deeply submerged in misrepresentation and deliberate fable. His books and brochures innumerable are so many red-hot shots, fired in succession from every point in the compass in England and America, for Cobbett went right round the circle from right to left and back again, dying in the odour of sanctity, a buttress of the Tory party and a pillar of Parliament. But he was most powerful when he was vindicating the righteousness of his own motives, recounting the experiences of his youth, or defending the poor and oppressed from the malice of their enemies. Whether in flattery, gammon, or invective, he was in turn unrivalled; but above all he excelled in his power of transmitting emotion to his readers—partly by sheer literary skill in manipulation, but also by the perspiring earnestness of his address, and sometimes by the grossest sentimentality. His *History of the Reformation*, *Sermons*, *Advice to a Young Man*, *Weekly Register*, *Peter Porcupine*, and other autobiographical *Tracts*, even more than his much-quoted *Rural Rides*, deserve a very high place among the title-deeds of the English vernacular.

Adam Smith was born at Kirkcaldy, Fifeshire, on June 5th, 1723, thirty-four years after Montesquieu. He was the son of Adam Smith, Writer to the Signet, Judge Advocate for Scotland, and Comptroller of the Customs in the Kirkcaldy district. From the burgh school the boy passed to Glasgow College, and then to Balliol at Oxford. Like other students of the century (Butler, Johnson, Gibbon, De Quincey, Southey, Shelley), he found the atmosphere of Oxford dull, heavy, and repressive. In 1746 he shook the dust of Oxford from his feet, and after two years without regular occupation began some public lectures in the college at Edinburgh upon the then novel subject (*meminisse juvabit!*) of English literature. He had a talent for quoting poetry, and dreamed of becoming a poet himself. But he found rhyming beyond him, and he had a contempt for blank verse (for which Johnson “could have hugged him”). “They do well to call it blank, for blank it is.” It was in the following year (1749), being then but twenty-six, that Adam Smith first addressed himself to what is pre-eminently his own “subject”—economics; and in this early course he already adumbrates his great idea of natural liberty in industrial affairs.

The Edinburgh lectures bore an immediate fruit. On the death of Mr. Loudon, Professor of Logic in Glasgow College, in 1750, Smith was appointed to the vacant chair, and so began that period of thirteen years of active academic work which he always looked back upon “as by far the most useful, and therefore by far the happiest and most honourable period” of his life. His popularity as a lecturer rapidly grew, and he had practically converted his fellow-citizens at Glasgow to free trade views long before he expounded them in a great book. His first publication of any importance, however, was not economic, but was the fruit of his lectures as Professor of Moral Philosophy (he had been transferred to this chair from that of Logic in 1752), and was called *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). It met with an unequivocal success when published in London by Millar, and received the approbation of so good a judge as Burke. David Hume, also, who had become one of Adam Smith's warmest friends, and with whom Smith always stayed when on his visits to Edinburgh, commended the book highly. One of the indirect results was that, largely through Hume's influence, the author was selected in the autumn of 1763 to be travelling tutor to the young Duke of Buccleuch, and set out in February, 1764, for Paris, Toulouse, and Geneva. He did not omit to pay a visit to Voltaire, whom he held in profound veneration, and on his return through Paris in 1766 he visited Quesnay. His pecuniary position henceforward assured by a pension of £300 from the Duke of Buccleuch, Adam Smith now spent some two years in retirement at Kirkcaldy, and it was during that period (1767–70) that he was perfecting the draft of his great book; but, nevertheless, between 1770 and 1776 the work was incessantly being altered, modified, and improved.

The Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, promised as long ago as 1759, was at length published on March 9th, 1776. The year 1776 is accordingly an epoch. If Horne's aphorism be true—that those books live the longest which have been carried longest in the womb of the parent—the longevity of *The Wealth of Nations* is assured, for it took twelve years to write and was in contemplation for nearly thirty. Great as was its reputation at the outset, it rapidly grew until, in 1857, in a moment of exaltation, Buckle wrote of it as in its ultimate results the most important book that has ever been written. This dictum was in no small measure anticipated by the German professor, C. J. Kraus, who wrote in 1796 that no book since the New Testament was likely to produce more beneficial results than *The Wealth of Nations*. In Spain, forward as ever in reaction and repression, the work had the honour of being suppressed by the Inquisition on account of “the lowness of its style and the looseness of its morals.” Its practical effects were seen in England within a few months of its appearance: for the budgets of 1777 and 1778 were reinforced by means of new taxes based upon suggestions thrown out in *The Wealth of Nations*. These practical effects have continued ever since.

To describe Adam Smith as the founder of political economy is just as reasonable as it would be to describe Darwin as the founder of biology. The site on which to lay his foundations was surveyed and chosen by Smith himself; but as in the case of other great fabrics of literature and philosophy, the ground had been prepared and levelled by the process of the trituration of great minds for centuries beforehand. The distinctive achievement of Adam Smith was to discover the principle of national connection between a vast assemblage of disjected and co-ordinate facts and theories, in which what was sound and true was often linked to what was false and contradictory. He was the enchanter who educed order out of this chaos, and converted the study of political economy into a progressive science. In many respects his methods would seem to resemble those of Darwin. His intellectual proceedings were calm, patient, and regular; he mastered a subject slowly and circumspectly, and carried his principle, with steady tenacity, through multitudes of details that would have checked many men, who, with greater mental ardour, yet lacked the same invincible persistence. Adam Smith survived his great work for fourteen years, and died on July 17th, 1790.

Into the majestic fabric of *The Wealth of Nations* he had concentrated all that was most valuable of the liberal thought of the day, and, like the great fabric reared by Burke, which is in many respects the fitting complement to it, his great work continues to permeate our national life and thought, often when we least suspect it. The main tendency and object of Smith's book can scarcely be better summarised than by Dugald Stewart, as demonstrating that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness is to maintain that order of things which nature has pointed out by allowing every man as long as he observes the rules of justice to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his interest and capital into the freest competition with those of his fellow-citizens. Restrictive duties, prohibitions and bounties, by which legislatures have endeavoured to force industries into particular channels, are alike condemned, and the natural effort of each man to improve his own position, when exerted with freedom and security, is represented as the mainspring of national progress.

II

GILBERT WHITE, born on July 18th, 1720, at the parsonage of Selborne, in Hampshire (of which parish his grandfather, also Gilbert White, was then vicar), was the eldest son of John White, a barrister. Gilbert was educated at Basingstoke under Thomas Warton, the father of the two celebrated brothers, and in November, 1740, he went into residence at Oriel, Oxford (where he knew William Collins, the poet), from which college he obtained his testamur in 1743. Next year he became a fellow, and in 1747 took orders. In 1757 he stood unsuccessfully for the provostship at Oriel. Had he been successful we should hardly have had our *Natural History of Selborne*. A few months later the college living of Moreton-Pinckney, in Northamptonshire, became vacant, and White presented it to himself, and filled it with a curate. He was still far from rich, having little beyond his fellowship and this living (about £200 a year). Eventually, in 1763, he inherited the small property of the Wakes at Selborne.

In 1751 White began to keep a garden calendar on pages of small letter-paper sheeted together; and the habit of observation and reflection, to which he had been attached from a boy, grew upon him daily. He was encouraged by the miscellaneous tracts of Benjamin Stillingfleet, and the similar journals of Scopoli. In 1767, during a visit to London, he got to know Pennant, and two years later

Daines Barrington, and his letters to these two men on natural history subjects, to the former with a view to his forthcoming *British Zoology* (1768-70), form the staple, respectively, of the first (forty-four letters) and second parts (sixty-six letters) of White's *Selborne*. The *Antiquities* are comprised in twenty-six additional and unaddressed letters. The only complete edition published in the author's lifetime was issued in boards at the price of one guinea, in December, 1788, as *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne in the County of Southampton: With Engravings, and an Appendix*. London, 1789. 4to. The author's name is not on the title-page, but it appears as Gil. White on p. v. Since then there have been, approximately, no less than eighty different editions, the best of them being Rennie's, in 1833, Leonard Jenyns's, 1843, Jardine's, 1853, Thomas Bell's, 1877, and Bowdler Sharpe's, 1900. White did not in the least regard himself as independent of books. His remarks show that he knew his Ray and Linnæus well, and was familiar also with the works of Derham and Willughby, Benjamin Stillingfleet, George Edwards, and even the credulous Dr. Plot. Among the poets he quotes Shakespeare, Thomson, Virgil, and Lucretius. The disjointed character of his work is explained by the fact that his book was not composed from notes, but consists of the notes and observations themselves, jotted down

(1883), in *After London* (1885), and *The Life of the Fields* (1884), containing *The Pageant of Summer*, he shows himself a stylist and an impressionist in prose of the first order. As it is necessary to know something of a continent to realise an island, so one must have knowledge of town to appreciate the country. The torrent of human life interested Jefferies fully as much as the wild currents of nature. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary development than he did. His ecstatic and somewhat mystical undersoul equipped him sincerely for that most dangerous and ambiguous of all literary rôles—that of the prose poet. Jefferies suffered much for his humanity, and died at Goring a worn and spent man in his thirty-ninth year on August 14th, 1887. He was buried in the fair cemetery of Broadwater, where the inland road turns coastward to Worthing. "Go there on a clear afternoon of May when the great sun is burning in the heaven and the wind (the wind that whispered its secrets to Bevis) is blowing softly through the grass, and you will find the whole cemetery ringing with the song of birds, thrushes loud on the neighbouring trees, wood-pigeons and rooks flying swiftly overhead, swallows passing and repassing, butterflies and humble-bees flitting to and fro, exactly that hum of awakening life which Jefferies so incomparably described. And here, among the birds and bees and flowers, within sight of the downs, within hearing of the sea, lies that passionate heart whose self-told *Story* shall be read and re-read, centuries hence, with tears of pity and admiration."

The naturalist in Jefferies had become merged in the pagan and neo-Hellenist, and later in the enthusiast, the communist, and the mystic (before he reached the more esoteric stage his idealism had much in common with that of Edward Carpenter, the author of *Towards Democracy*, *The Simplification of Life*, and *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*). The interpretation of nature in accordance with Gilbert White's legacy has been carried on with more fidelity by Thoreau and Burroughs, and in quite recent years by W. H. Hudson. In the beautiful descriptions and vivid episodes of *Downland*, *Hampshire Days*, and *Green Mansions*, while clearly sustaining the best traditions of Selborne and Coate, Mr. Hudson has gone farther than either of his predecessors in emphasising the human values of the animal world. Such interpretation is conquering a new kingdom for the realms of Literature.

III

THE contact between Belles Lettres and controversial literature becomes much narrower as philosophy becomes more specialised, and it is possible henceforth merely to indicate one or two of the chief lines and instruments of development. A link between John Locke and the later common-sense school, as also between the old Hellenism of Marlowe and Chapman and the neo-Hellenism of Keats and Morris, is supplied by Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (grandson of the shifty Chancellor of Charles II.), the shy, polite, and studious author of *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times* (3 vols., 1711), who regarded the factions of his day with bewilderment, and died abroad early in 1713, *æt.* 42. The genteelst of writers, and most amiable, temperate, and virtuous of noblemen, the moral sense or conscience which was the pivot of Shaftesbury's system was attacked both by the orthodox Berkeley and the unorthodox Bernard Mandeville. Berkeley objected to a vague moral beauty unconnected with religion. Mandeville, the eighteenth-century Hobbes, who looks to the bad rather than the good instincts of humanity to explain the distinctions of human society, laughs in *The Fable of the Bees* (1723) at the delicate philosophy of the noble recluse, who expects goodness in our

species as we do a sweet taste in grapes and China oranges, of which, if any of them are sour, we boldly pronounce that they are not come to that perfection their nature is capable of. To Shaftesbury's optimism are for the most part clearly cognate the leading ideas of Bolingbroke, Pope, Francis Hutcheson, Reid, Robertson, and that common-sense philosophy which is so typical of the eighteenth century, and coloured its religious sentiments so profoundly.

George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, author of the famous line, "Westward the course of empire takes its way," to whom Pope ascribed "every virtue under heaven," and to whom Swift's Vanessa bequeathed her savings, was one of the most delightful and virtuous characters in the range of literary history. As a prose master even, he had not a little of the charm of style which we attribute so readily to a breather of the same air with Swift and Goldsmith. His great book on *The Principles of Human Knowledge*¹ (1710-11) was suggested by religious considerations. Troubled by the advance of materialism, Berkeley evolved his ingenious theory of immaterialism to pursue the enemy into their own country. Materialism, he argued, was upon analysis no less philosophically than morally unsound; and his great discovery, that *esse* is the equivalent of *percipi*, alone

¹ He defended the theory of this treatise later in a series of *Dialogues*.

entitles him to a foremost place in the history of speculation. Matter cannot be proved to have any substantial existence apart from the mind. He did not see, when he propounded this "ideal" theory, that Hume would apply this

same kind of analytic operation to spiritual as well as material considerations. The life of this amiable apostle and Platonic enthusiast (in an age when enthusiasm was anathema) came to an end at Oxford in January, 1753.

THE great diversion of the century was made, however, not against the materialists, but against the deists. Deriving indirectly from Kett, Marlowe, Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Dr. Clarke, and even to some extent the virtuous Locke, the immediate foundation of the cult in the closing years of the seventeenth century was the *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696) of John Toland, who insisted upon the necessity of absolute demonstration in matters of religious belief—the measure of progress, he assumed, being the elimination of all mystery and superstition. The movement was extended upon parallel lines by William Wollaston and by Matthew Tindal (1657–1733), of All Souls', who was perhaps the most important of the English deists. His views as to the antiquity of Christianity, the weakness of all explanations as to why it was concealed from primitive humanity, the extent to which it was anticipated by other religions, and the inconsistency between dogmatic theology and all ideas of development proved so unpalatable that they were destroyed in MS. by one of the fathers of the Anglican Church, who preferred that method to mere refutation. Thomas Morgan, one of the pioneers of modern historical science, as applied to biblical interpretation, and Anthony Collins, in his *Discourses on Free Thinking*, contented themselves mainly with pointing out the cruces and difficulties, and the varieties of readings and explanations—especially in the Old Testament. Thomas Woolston, on the other hand, directed his discourses boldly against the Prophecies and Miracles, which he approached with something of the homely and facetious vein that Mark Twain was many years later to apply to the victory scored by Elijah over the prophets of Baal. His levity was miscalculated, and poor Woolston was put to confusion by a gaoler who kept him in close confinement until he died in 1733. He was subsequently refuted at considerable length by Pearce, Chandler, and Thomas Sherlock, who, deriving the hint either from Bunyan or the earlier Richard Bernard (*Isle of Man*), anticipated Paley in appealing to a British jury. Judge: "What say you? Are the apostles guilty of giving false evidence in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, or are they not guilty?" Foreman: "Not guilty, my lud."

A more intellectual apologist was Daniel Waterland (1633–1740), a Cambridge man of profound learning and acuteness, trained to clash with such minds as those of Bentley, Hoadly, and Archbishop Sherlock, his contemporaries, who defended the Triune God with vigour and trenchancy in his *Vindication of Christ's Divinity* (1719) and *Doctrine of the Trinity Asserted* (1734) against the common-sense and scripture theories of Dr. Samuel Clarke. A not less able and far more spiritual defender of the faith was William Law, the recluse of King's Cliffe, whose *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1726) was destined to prove one of the great quickeners of a generation not particularly responsive to holiness. Yet this little book proved an overmatch both for Johnson and Wesley, and seventy years later served as a model for the *Practical View of Christianity* by William Wilberforce. Law was not, of course, a party man, but he was a strong Churchman, and his answers to Tindal and his *Remarks upon . . . The Fable of the Bees* show him a close reasoner if not a caustic controversialist. But the Vauban of Anglican defence in the eighteenth century, "The Bacon of Anglican Theology," was by general consent Joseph Butler (1692–1752). Son of a prosperous linen-draper and non-conformist of Wantage, Joseph deserted dissent for Oxford only to find that university frivolous. He did not intend to remain long upon the lower rungs of the ladder of promotion, and the mighty sermons he preached soon spelt unmistakably "Preferment." Rich livings in some abundance relieved him from sordid cares while he elaborated his "immortal" work *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*, which appeared in 1736 and secured the author a position of confidence about Queen Caroline. One of the last requests of this broad-minded princess to her much distraught husband was to "promote Butler." In 1738 he accepted under spirited protest the lean see of Bristol; subsequently he was offered Canterbury, but preferred the "deeper manger" of Durham with all its principalities intact. This was just two years before his death on June 16th, 1752. A bulwark of common sense and a dripstone of disapproval against every species of enthusiasm in religion, Butler represents Protestantism at one of its most logical and arid altitudes. Assuming a belief in a beneficent deity, and an acceptance of natural religion on the part of his readers, he demonstrates to the fashionable deistic philosophers of the day that if revealed religion perished, natural religion might well quake with fear. He addressed himself to the doubts of his own age. Barely a generation passed before we find people asking whether Butler did not raise more doubts than he stilled. This much we must admit of our redoubtable Ductor Dubitantium: he postulates from the first the existence of God and the known course of nature. These data accepted, he goes on deducing and proving to his heart's content—collecting the title-deeds, but forgetting in the heat of pursuit and litigation to pay much attention to the cultivation of the Christian estate itself. His whole cast of mind is practical, logical, and moral, rather than speculative or spiritual. Butler's chiefest rival among the literary personalities of the Georgian Church is William Warburton (1698–1779), the contriver of a mammoth theological Dunciad in the footnotes of which small deists are impaled, as it were, upon skewers. A slovenly bishop (of Gloucester) who was always reading when he should have been ruling, Warburton's ill-digested learning and dogmatic arrogance, the deference he exacted even from the formidable Pope, and the abject subservience from the formal Hurd, combine to present to us a singular and almost grotesque

personality. His book upon *The Divine Legation of Moses* (1740) is one of the strangest literary conglomerates upon record. It is clearly to the interest of the priestly caste, argues the Bishop, to invent a future world to redress the balance of the present. Moses abstained from any such invention. Therefore Moses was a true prophet. Q.E.D.

As Sherlock and Butler had answered Tindal, Woolston, and Collins, so in a later generation Paley and Watson were to answer Voltaire, Hume, and Thomas Paine. Cast in the mould of divines such as Secker, Sherlock, Butler, and Principal Robertson, William Paley (1743–1805), the very incarnation of an ecclesiastical era, sets himself to answer the objectors to a divine faith by rule of three in arithmetic. Look, he says in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, at the undesigned coincidences, add them up and then take away the number of contradictions between Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the balance in favour of Christianity will amount to just 4·7. Or, again (in his *Evidences*), what had the apostles to make out of representing Christ as a thaumaturgist? Would a sensible Englishman deliberately incur a cruel death for a vague, uncertain, hearsay belief? The thing is incredible. Such lucidity is admirable. As a counsel for the defence Paley is a very warm man indeed—a solid, ineradicable Yorkshireman and archdeacon.

Of all the absentee bishops of the period there is not one who steered clearer of his own diocese (Llandaff) or more persistently broke the tenth commandment by coveting the diocese of his neighbour than Bishop Watson (1737–1816), the last apologist of the old school, and from a literary point of view one of the very best. His *Apology for Christianity* was followed by that *Apology for the Bible* which elicited from George III. the notorious “What, what! Apologise for the Bible. What!” But the good monarch was no Grecian, still less a philosopher, or he would have recognised that Watson’s *Apology* was a perfect epitome of the entire churchmanship of the eighteenth century.

Among the most serviceable editions of Burke are the eight-volume editions of 1823, 1827, and 1852, the Bohn edition of 1853, and the two inexpensive editions commenced in the Standard Library and World’s Classics. A good critical edition is a desideratum. The Clarendon Press has issued *Selections*,* and there are biographical sketches by Sir James Prior,* Chadwick, T. Macknight, G. Croly, A. A. Fry, Vaughan, M. Arnold, H. J. Nicoll, E. A. Pankhurst, Pillans, W. Willis, Prof. Graham, and John Morley.* The career of Cobbett, as reconstructed from the inflammatory pages of *The Political Register*, in which he preached the cause of reform, is to be studied in the *Life* of Edward Smith, and the *Life as told in his Writings* by E. Irving Carlyle (1904).

The conflict of abstract thought in the eighteenth century may be pursued through the pages of Buckle, Gibbon’s *Autobiography*, Paine (ed. Moncure Conway), Bentham, Huxley’s Hume, Lecky, Abbey and Overton’s works on the Church in the eighteenth century, Stephen’s *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*,* and A. W. Benn’s *English Rationalism* (1906).*

There are excellent Lives with studies of Adam Smith by R. B. Haldane (1885), John Rae (1895), and Dr. Cunningham (1904). An attempt to exhibit the contribution he made to economics in due perspective is made by Arnold Toynbee in his *Industrial Revolution*. According to Toynbee the development of Economic Science in England has four chief landmarks. The first is the publication in 1776 of Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, in which he investigates the causes of wealth and aims at the substitution of industrial freedom for a system of restriction. The production of wealth concerned him to the exclusion of the immediate welfare of man. This was spoken on the very eve of the great Industrial Revolution. A second stage is marked by the *Essay on Population* (1798), of Thomas Robert Malthus (1766–1834), which may be considered the product of that revolution already in full swing. Adam Smith had concentrated all his attention on a large production. Malthus directed his inquiries not to the causes of wealth, but to the causes of poverty, and found them in his theory of population—namely, that by an inexorable law of nature population tends ever to outstrip the means of subsistence. A third stage is indicated by the *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* (1817), in which David Ricardo (1772–1823) seeks to ascertain the laws of the distribution of wealth. Adam Smith had shown how wealth could be produced under a system of industrial freedom; Ricardo showed how wealth is distributed under such a system, a problem which could not have occurred to any one before his time. The fourth stage is marked by John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), in which, after pointing out the distinction between the laws of production and those of distribution, the writer goes on to try and solve the problem how wealth ought to be distributed. Since Mill’s day a fifth stage has been reached in which, under the auspices of Toynbee, Marshall, Ashley, Webb, and Cunningham, the tendency has been more and more to study economics from the historical point of view.

CHAPTER XI

MINOR NOVELISTS, MAINLY ROMANTIC: FROM "OTRANTO" TO "HAJJI BABA"

"Mrs. Radcliffe makes her readers twice children; and from the dim and shadowy veil which she draws over the objects of her fancy, forces us to believe all that is strange and next to impossible, of their mysterious agency."—HAZLITT, *English Comic Writers*.

Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*—The *Mysteries* of Ann Radcliffe—"Monk" Lewis—"Melmoth" Maturin—*Vathek* and its author—"Anastasius" Hope—J. J. Morier—"Zeluco" Moore—William Godwin—*Frankenstein*.

IN 1763, Horace Walpole, whose waking thoughts were mainly occupied with the Castle at Strawberry and villa Gothic generally (he was then forty-six), had a bad Gothic dream. From this inspiration, in the course of two months' writing between "tea-time" and six o'clock, he spun the preposterous mediæval nightmare to which he gave the name of *The Castle of Otranto*. Now the universal verdict would be Selwyn's opinion, that *Otranto* is too childish to make even a schoolgirl yawn, and the machinery of the colossal casque, and the armour that drops blood, and the sentimental tale intertwined with it all, simply bore the present-day reader to extinction. Yet *The Castle of Otranto* undoubtedly set a fashion for mediæval legend, diablerie, mystery, horror, and Gothic decoration in fiction which led directly by the route of Ann Radcliffe to the *Waverley* Novels, and even to Victor Hugo.

The Tales of Mystery and of Terror that came over the spirit of the dream of English Romance between Sterne and Scott, an interval of between thirty and forty years, are now very little cared about. From *The Castle of Otranto* to *Melmoth* one thinks but little of those "horrid tales," save as having contributed to the lambent satire of *Northanger Abbey*. Walpole and Clara Reeve started the fashion of mediæval mystery and romance, and old Godwin and his daughter kept it going well on into the nineteenth century, but the great masters and mistress of the *genre* were Mrs. Radcliffe, "Monk" Lewis, and Charles Robert Maturin.

Ann Ward was born in London on July 9th, 1764. Her parents were tradespeople, but she always claimed remote descent from the famous Dutch family of De Witt, a representative of which came over with the Vermuydens, and married into the Chelseden family. After two comparative failures, Mrs. Radcliffe brought out *The Romance of the Forest* in 1791. It was followed by the still more successful *Mysteries of Udolpho* of 1794, which was eulogised by Sheridan and Fox, and brought the authoress the then almost unprecedented sum for a novel of £500. She was even more successful with *The Italian* (1797), which is the best of her works from the point of view of construction of character, though it is inferior in the Radcliffian qualities of moonlight mystery and Blue Danube style of landscape. At the moment of her greatest triumph, which Scott himself always professed to admire greatly, Mrs. Radcliffe had the strength of mind to retire. She produced a single volume of *Rhineland Travel* in 1795, which is noticeable rather for being sensible and well written than pre-eminently picturesque, but beyond that lived a secluded life, journeying round the coast with her husband, and "devouring" the novels of other people, until her death on February 7th, 1823.

Her real gifts have been, we think, to a certain extent misapprehended. She wrote an excellent style, rhythmic and musical in a high degree, and she was one of the first to excel in sentimental landscape, the landscape which is lighted up, like the stage in a melodrama, to

suit the particular conjuncture of the hero's or heroine's affairs as the case may be; and, appropriately enough, this landscape is more often than not of a Salvator Rosa complexion. Attempt at verisimilitude there is practically none, for her landscapes are of a pearliness and verdure quite foreign to the south of Europe, in which most of her plots are laid. Yet her efforts in this direction are seldom wholly destitute of charm.

Her manipulation of mystery and horror was the visible attraction to most of her contemporary readers, no doubt. To the modern reader, it must be admitted, her dialogue and characterisation (except in *The Italian*, in which Schedoni undoubtedly makes a new departure), her plots and carefully calculated machinery of jangling chains, mysterious music, echoing vaults, sliding panels, and sinister bandit barons, appear almost inconceivably and childishly pinchbeck—all the sensational and blood-curdling business has been done so enormously better by writers like Wilkie Collins and in books such as *Jane Eyre* and *Uncle Silas*. To the generation which had gaped over the helmet in *The Castle of Otranto*, it was, of course, a sparkling novelty, and scholars such as Warton and Crabbe Robinson sat up all night over *Udolpho*, just as in the 'eighties of the nineteenth century all Oxford (and Cambridge, too, no doubt) went mad over *She*. So puissant in literature is the power of novelty. The obscurity of her later years and her private mystery, whatever it was, which led her to seclude herself (as in the case of Borrow, her fame had been dead and buried for nearly a quarter of a century before she actually deceased), have had the effect of unduly diminishing her literary consideration.

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775—1818) was, as a novelist, a mere creature of Mrs. Radcliffe's. The son of a wealthy official with estates in Jamaica, he was educated at Westminster and Christ Church, and then proceeded to Weimar, and subsequently to The Hague, with a view perhaps to diplomatic service. He was, however, introduced to Goethe, and he drank deep draughts of German romanticism and poetry. He began to shape romantic ballads inspired by the inevitable Bürger, and commenced a novel with supernatural machinery and spurious mediæval and legendary colouring. The novel dragged, however, as we learn from his amusing letters to his mother, until the appearance of

Udolpho, which gave him just the requisite stimulus. Lewis had an immense appetite for demonology and "Gothic" patterns, but little taste, no humour, and less than no sense of historical propriety. The result is seen in the uncanny extravaganza which he gave to the world in 1795 under the title of *Ambrosio, or The Monk*. It gained Lewis a world-wide notoriety, and he was henceforth known in society as "Monk" Lewis. He bought a seat in Parliament, but was seldom seen there, for he was writing a transpontine drama called *The Castle Spectre*, the success of the season of 1797. The "brushwood splendour" of this good-natured fopling (as Lockhart calls Lewis) may have dazzled Scott for a moment in 1798. At any rate, Scott was flattered by the Monk's notice at Edinburgh, and was delighted to contribute to the *Ballad Miscellany*, largely composed of specimens of German *Volkslieder* and versions of "the German diablerie," Lewis brought out in 1799-1801 as *Tales of Terror* and *Tales of Wonder*. Byron later, during the riotous days of the Regency, liked to be seen in the company of Monk Lewis, though he professed that he bored him not a little. In 1815, however, Lewis sailed away to his Jamaica property, and died on a return journey in 1818. His narrative *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* is to-day by far the most readable of his numerous books.

Charles Robert Maturin, born at Dublin in 1782, was the grandson of Gabriel Jasper Maturin, Swift's successor as Dean of St. Patrick's. He wrote three novels under the pen-name of Dennis Jasper Murphy: these were *Montorio*, *The Wild Irish Boy*, and *The Milesian Chief*. His position as a parson made it almost impossible at that time to avow a novel. In 1816, through the kindness of Scott and Byron, he actually got his romantic play of *Bertram* on the boards of Drury Lane, and owing to the acting of Kean, this strange devil-dodging fustian actually made a success and brought in the author a cool thousand pounds. His chance of promotion in the Church was gone; but Maturin managed to keep up his fame, if not his income, by two novels, both of which exhibit some signs of more or less decided genius—*Women* (1818), from which he was with difficulty persuaded by Scott, in an admirable letter full of ripe, mellow wisdom, from incorporating a savage retort upon S. T. Coleridge, who had vented his unacted

spleen against *Bertram* in the *Biographia Literaria*; and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), a singular compound of Faust and the Wandering Jew, in which the sense of mysterious and supernatural awe is powerfully evoked, though the effect of the story is almost annihilated by the extraordinary involution of plot within plot by which the narrative is arrested and confused. His last story was a fanciful historical romance called *The Albigenses*, which appeared shortly before Maturin's death at Dublin on October 30th, 1824. *The Milesian Chief* and *The Albigenses* both had a perceptible effect upon the romance as developed by Sir Walter Scott and the prolific G. P. R. James. *Melmoth* exercised a parallel influence in France, where it was admired by and suggested a theme to the immortal Balzac. Improvident and impecunious to the last degree and fond of the most grotesque display, the inextricable weirdness of the man and his work have given a perhaps somewhat adventitious vitality to *Bertram* and *Melmoth*.

Born at Fonthill in Wiltshire on October 1st, 1760, the son of a fabulously wealthy alderman and Lord Mayor of London, William Beckford succeeded in 1781 to a fortune of considerably over a million—a fortune far greater then, relatively speaking, than it would be now. Beckford's moderate equipment of brain scarcely proved equal to a position for which his education had done little to fit him. He wrote *Vathek*, however, married an earl's daughter, sat in Parliament without making any impression, wandered about Europe, mainly in Portugal, and at Fonthill and Bath created the impression of being a very eccentric and somewhat morose voluptuary and virtuoso, with strange alternating manias for hermetic seclusion and profuse display. Addison in *The Vision of Mirza*, Johnson in *Rasselas*, James Ridley in *Tales of the Genii* (1764), had all used the Oriental tale with success as a first-rate vehicle for a story with a moral. Beckford in his story of a grandson of the illustrious Haroun al Raschid eliminated the moral and introduced a double portion of local colour, voluptuous imagery, and Oriental extravagance. The sublimity, descriptive wealth, and correctness of *Vathek* fascinated Byron, who (though it can hardly be claimed that he was a competent judge) called it a perfect Eastern tale.

Another *richissime virtuoso* who wrote a novel of which Byron condescended to approve

was Thomas Hope (1770—1831), eldest son of a magnificent Amsterdam merchant (who formed a palace of Dutch art at Haarlem) of Scottish descent. As a young man he spent eight years in sketching architectural remains in Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Syria, and among the isles of the Levant; and during these extended artistic and Bohemian *wanderjahre* he collected the materials for his remarkable romance of *Anastasis*, which first appeared anonymously in 1819. The autobiography of a Greek who, to escape the consequence of villainies, runs away to sea, turns renegade, fights for the Turks, and encounters every kind of vicissitude and adventure, supposed to have been written about 1795, *Anastasis* forms a picturesque narrative of variety and originality, though its vitality is not a little marred by the style, which is too sententious and rhetorical for the effects needed. On its first appearance it was judged to be beyond the power of Hope and was confidently ascribed to Byron, who lamented first that such a book was *not* his, and secondly that it *was* Hope's.

Extremely interesting though the material of *Anastasis* is, it loses by the method of presentation, still more by the fact that it has been completely eclipsed by another Oriental autobiography which appeared within five years of it—the incomparable *Hajji Baba*, to have read which together with Lane, Curzon, Lady Hester Stanhope, and *Eothen*, is to know the East in its ancient dress as few save the most instructed and observant travellers can hope to know it.

Born and nurtured in an Oriental atmosphere, the author of *Hajji*, James J. Morier, was one of the three sons of Isaac Morier, British Consul at Stamboul. In 1807, a young man of twenty-eight, James was at a loose end in Constantinople when, as a return for his father's hospitality, Sir Harford Jones, then *en route* for Teheran as British envoy extraordinary, consented to take him as private secretary. In May, 1809, Morier set out on his return journey from Teheran in company with the Persian envoy to the Court of St. James, Mirza Abul Hassan, whom he thus had for months under the closest observation. How well this opportunity was utilised all who have delighted in the Mirza Firouz of *Hajji* will appreciate. While at home he wrote a Persian *Journey* and then, in 1811, returned to Persia again with Sir Gore Ouseley, where he remained as an observer and for part of the time *Chargé d'Affaires* during six more years.

Nine years after his final return appeared, in 1824, the ripened product of his Persian experiences and reflections through the mouthpiece of that inimitable rogue and Persian Gil Blas, *Hajji Baba*, barber of Ispahan. It was followed in 1828 by *Hajji Baba in England*, by some indifferent novels, and finally by two Scott-inspired romances of considerable merit, *Zohrab* and *Ayesha, the Maid of Kars*.

In order to illustrate Persian life in a great variety of phases, Morier, in *Hajji*, makes an unblushing adventurer, a thievish and scoundrelly but not unkindly charlatan, narrate the history of his career from its beginning in the shop of his father, an Ispahan barber, down to the point at which he becomes chief secretary to the Persian ambassador, about to set out for England. Without effort, in the most natural flow of mildly exciting but always racily expressed and interesting narrative, which only at one point (where Zeenab, a Kurdish slave, of exceptional beauty, who has thrown a spell over the egotistical Hajji, is transported into the Shah's harem with consequences fatal to her thread of life) rises within measurable distance of tragedy, the whole panorama of Oriental life, nowhere, perhaps, more unchanging than in Iran, is skilfully unrolled before us like a Persian carpet. It is infinitely funny and amusing, true human comedy, and so thoroughly life-like and Persian that the Shah's ambassador at St. James's is said to have remonstrated more than once upon the scarifying truth of the satire.

Hajji is a wonderful *tour de force*, true to the spirit without neglecting the letter. The figures are alive, many of them indeed are unsparing portraits, and by all who know Eastern rascality and imposture by actual experience the picture is said to be as exact as it is vivacious. After a long diplomatic career, Morier died at Brighton, "a good-looking and good-humoured Tory," on March 19th, 1849.

Almost contemporary with *Vathek* was the *Zeluco* of Dr. John Moore (1729—1802), the father of the hero of Coruña, the friend, physician, and editor of Smollett, and one of the first literary correspondents and admirers of Robert Burns. After a varied and interesting professional career in the Low Countries, in Paris, America, in Glasgow, and in the south of Europe as guardian of the young Duke of Hamilton, Moore brought out two well-informed *Views of society in Western Europe and Italy*

(1779—81), followed by the novel, largely inspired by Smollett, to which he gave the name of *Zeluco*—the name being that of the only son of a noble Sicilian family, accomplished and fascinating, but spoilt by maternal indulgence, and at length rioting in dissipation, first in Italy, afterwards in Spain and the West Indies, and ending in a state of chronic misery. The best part of the book is occupied by the conversations and quarrels of two gentlemen's gentlemen—one a lowlander and the other a highlander. The book evidently influenced Byron, who first conceived Childe Harold as a kind of poetical *Zeluco*.

Another novelist of the last decade of the eighteenth century who combines the mystery tale with the doctrinaire element in a most remarkable manner was William Godwin. Born at Wisbech on March 3rd, 1756, Godwin was brought up as a Sandemanian or extreme Calvinist and a Tory, went through a Presbyterian college course, and did not abandon his primitive beliefs until he had been in the ministry for over five years.

In 1797 and 1799 respectively Godwin brought out two remarkably striking novels, which will probably do more to transmit his name to posterity than his ingenious but somewhat shallow and wholly impracticable political theories. The first of these is a story of a youthful secretary of humble birth, *Caleb Williams*, whose morbid curiosity leads him first to suspect his master, Falkland, of a murder; then, after a Hamlet-like course of probing a deadly wound, to pursue the search for *pièces de conviction* in such an unmistakable manner as to leave Falkland no option but the "bare bodkin." The rest of the book is concerned with the relentless persecution of Caleb by Falkland, who values his reputation above everything. The didactic purpose of the book, to expose the shortcoming of justice and the evils of aristocratic power, is absorbed in the genuine interest excited by the story. The invisible net which the local magnate, Falkland, is able to weave round the unfortunate Caleb is suggested with great skill. The moral of the second story, *St. Leon*, is the inability of the elixir of life and philosopher's stone, conveying immortal youth and inexhaustible riches, to confer happiness upon a creature so finite as man. But here again the doctrinaire element of the story evaporates amid the elaboration of an ingenious plot, the central motive of which

Sir Walter Besant utilised with considerable skill in his story of *The Ten Years' Tenant*.

Apart from his stories, Godwin was an indefatigable compiler, biographer, literary antiquary (almost after the Isaac D'Israeli type), and even writer of children's books. He committed the most revolutionary and subversive theories to paper with all the imperturbable journalistic industry of a Defoe, and his logical clearness and calmness enabled him to exercise an extraordinary influence over authors infinitely wider or deeper than himself, notably Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Bulwer Lytton, Hazlitt, and a host of minor writers. Neither his industry, his philosophy, nor his inexorable logic enabled him to put money in his purse; and he continued without shame to sponge upon his admirers, until Murray, Rogers, and a few veteran Whigs managed to get the extinct firebrand a small sinecure as yeoman usher of the Exchequer in 1833. He died three years later, on April 7th, 1836.

The occult element in *St. Leon* and some German ghost stories, read during a wet week at Diodati, on the Lake of Geneva, in company with her husband, the poet Shelley, and Lord Byron, inspired the weird tale which Godwin's daughter Mary (1797—1851) wrote in 1816,

and submitted for publication in 1817. *Frankenstein* is the name of a student at Ingolstadt, who constructs from charnel-house material and dissecting-room experience a human form, eight feet high, into which, after continued experiments, he succeeds in breathing the breath of life. The monster has muscular strength, vital energy, and strong animal passions, but no soul. It longs for animal love and animal sympathy, but is shunned by all. Powerful for evil, and soon rendered sensible of its horrible appearance and loathsome deformity, the monster seeks with persistence to inflict retribution on its creator. Such is the story of a "modern Prometheus" which Mary Shelley seeks to tell with very little reality, but with a plentiful amount of high-flown sentiment and verbiage. The same or a similar motive employed by Mr. Wells in *Dr. Moreau's Island* becomes horrible in the extreme. In *Frankenstein*, vaguely as the whole conception is realised from the first, it loses what slight reality it possesses when the monster begins to speak, and the story becomes insufferably wearisome and mawkish. Mrs. Shelley's remaining *Tales and Stories*, collected by Dr. Garnett in 1891, are even more languid and impalpable—*Contes d'Hoffmann*, with a difference.

CHAPTER XII

CHATTERTON AND BLAKE

"The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him."—*Adonais*.

"Blake's poems have been sold hitherto only in manuscript. I never read them; but a friend at my desire procured the 'Sweep Song.' There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning—

'Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
Thro' the desarts of the night,'

which is glorious, but, alas! I have not the book; for the man is flown whither I know not—to Hades or a Mad House. But I must look upon him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age."—*LAMB to B. Barton*, 1824.

Sham antiques—The Ossianic imposture—Chatterton and the Rowley forgeries—England's unique mystic—William Blake.

FROM 1660 to 1760 English thought was occupied under such leadership as that of Locke, Dryden, Congreve, Pope, Addison, Swift, Bolingbroke, in getting rid of the last relics of feudal barbarism. The Crown, the Parliament, the manor, and the old penal code were left, it is true; the social habits, arts, faith, religion, and letters of the old mediæval world were irrevocably gone—things past and remote. This consummation was finally assured by the confirmation given to the modern *régime* by the ultimate failure of the young Chevalier and the Jacobite reactionaries in 1745. The result was a prompt change in the sentiment of the time. The old order of things no sooner ceased to be formidable than it commenced to be picturesque. The triumph of urban refinement and the self-gratulation of common sense was followed in infallible sequence by the awakening of a new curiosity about the mysterious eld. The Augustan age in its zeal for rationality, civism, and trim parterres had neglected wholly the wild freshness of an age when literature was a wildflower that grew on the common.

The world began to be conscious of this even while Voltaire and Pope were at the very height of their renown. A strong revulsion of feeling was waiting to find expression, even as now,

after a century of triumphant mechanical and industrial development, a strong current is setting in the direction of a simpler and less encumbered ideal of living. Rousseau first laid the axe to the root of this over-elaboration of human life. What the men of the classical period believed in, he reversed and denied. What they admired, he rejected. Back from the effeminate over-civilised south to the rude and unsophisticated north. From white to swarthy, from noontide to dawn. Back from books and formulas to mankind. From the town to the country. From the plains and fertile valleys to the mountain-peaks and the pine-woods. From the cities where men wax rich and accumulate luxuries to the earlier and more primitive moods of earth.

The happiest communities were now to be found, it was thought, not in Southern or Western Europe, but in dim outlying regions, in the Hebrides or Iceland, in secret recesses of Central America, safe from Spanish avarice, under the glow of the Aurora Borealis, in the land of the midnight sun! Decentralisation, in short, began to be the *dernier cri* even in literature. We must go not to Italy but to the Highlands for our poetic emotions, we must avoid the classic coffee-houses and the classic academies and go to the street corners

in search of Volkspoesie: a mediæval chest and a yellow parchment were for a season to be regarded as the surest guarantee of poetic pre-eminence.

Some such revulsion of feeling as this, not universal of course, but extending widely among the leisured and cultivated classes, can alone explain some of the phenomena of the second half of the eighteenth century. This "prosaic" eighteenth century at its midmost, far from being so wholly unpoetic as it is commonly described, was in reality athirst for new imaginative sensations. How else are we to explain the powerful enthusiasm which awaited and welcomed the Ossianic poems, the *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* as published by Bishop Percy in 1765, the archæological enthusiasm of the Wartons, Hurd, Ritson, Tyrwhitt, George Ellis, and George Steevens, the Celtic poems of Gray, the "Rowley Poems" of Chatterton, the sentimentalities of Beattie and Bowles, and finally the almost anarchical apocalypse of William Blake? Not many ages (certainly not our own, for example) would have given such a good reception to so many novel and divergent projections of pure literature by writers most of whom were far in advance of their own age; yet without whom we should scarcely have had Wordsworth or Coleridge, Scott, Keats, or Rossetti.

The cordiality of the age of Johnson for these strange experiments is to be explained largely, no doubt, by the fact that the manifestation was tempered in each particular instance to suit the uninitiated palate of the period. Real translations from Celtic or Gaelic, such as those of Lady Charlotte Guest or Lady Gregory, would have been wholly unintelligible, "monstrous," and "disgusting" to contemporaries of Walpole and Mason. They were capable of assimilating the mountain rivulet only after it had been carefully prepared and bottled for their use by James Macpherson.

A crofter's son, born in 1736, Macpherson published his first *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* in June, 1760, under the auspices of the Dioscuri of Scottish Letters at that epoch, Robert Blair and John Home, author of *Douglas*. These two worthies had come across Macpherson, then a poor tutor, in 1759, and had been greatly impressed by his, very imperfect, knowledge of Gaelic, which they regarded (justly enough, as later explorers have proved) as the key to a literature rich in Celtic

fantasy. Macpherson had collected some of its treasures, and although his studies never took him beyond the outer courts of the temple, he caught an echo of new intonations and the sound of some strange names that were to catch the ear of Europe. With this imperfect substitute for inspiration he commenced the preparation of those mountain monotones which were eventually to assume the form of a species of epic of prose poetry—contained in the six books of *Fingal* and the eight books of *Temora*, which he alleged to be a paraphrase of a poem composed by Ossian about 250 A.D. There is little doubt now that the work was almost wholly spurious, and that Macpherson was the slave of the same curious mania for deception which we trace in Psalmanazar, Chatterton, Ireland, Robert Surtees, and Fiona Macleod.

The extraordinary thing is the way in which this "Poesie du Nord" thrilled the taste of the cultured world with a new emotion, almost deceived Gray, threw the republic of letters into the awkward dilemma of regarding Macpherson either as a brilliant impostor or an uninspired drudge, moved the sceptical Gibbon to speak of the "elegant genius of Ossian," captivated the wonder-years of Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Bürger, Chateaubriand, nay of the great Napoleon himself, gave the title-name (Oscar) to a new dynasty, and directly inspired the muses of Blake and Byron, the mænad of Walt Whitman, and the Mrs. Nickleby muse of Martin Tupper.

As Macpherson caricatured Celtic epic and Nahum Tate desecrated Shakespeare, as Percy trimmed and embellished our beautiful wilding ballads of ancient days; so Chatterton evolved a great poet of the time of Edward IV. and a language that never was heard by land or sea out of his own inner consciousness—all for the benefit of this "unpoetical age."

The son of a poor schoolmaster and descendant of a line of sextons at the beautiful fourteenth and fifteenth century romance in stone known as St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, Thomas Chatterton was born in that city on November 20th, 1752. A boy of peculiar temper, not particularly intelligent, but passionate, secretive, and not conspicuous for telling the truth, he was admitted a scholar at Colston's School in 1760, and remained for nearly seven years a bluecoat boy. In the meantime he had become very studious, perused antiquities and old English poetry with a

precocious ardour, and pored over a number of old documents from the muniment room at St. Mary's, which had been stored in the lumber-room in his mother's house. In December, 1762, he wrote his first poem, *On the Last Epiphany*, and two years later produced the first of his sham antiques, *Elinoure and Juga*, with which he imposed upon the usher in his school and other amateur antiquaries of the town; while in 1767 he victimised an ambitious pewterer with a fictitious pedigree, and in 1768 hoaxed the whole city with a description from an old MS. of the opening of Bristol bridge in 1248. Meanwhile, in July, 1767, he had been bound apprentice for seven years to a Bristol attorney, named John Lambert, under whom his servitude was galling. The poet slept with the footboy and took his meals in the kitchen. Yet among these sordid surroundings he conceived and planned the marvellous series of poems which he alleged to have been written at Bristol by the poet-priest, Thomas Rowley, and others in the fifteenth century, and which were first collected by Thomas Tyrwhitt in 1777.

As a matter of fact the poems, which are probably among the most original in the universe, were the unaided work of a Bristol lad, aged sixteen, and the quaint disguising jargon, which a credulous age accepted as English as she was written in the days of Lydgate, was the pure guess-work of this eighteenth-century child of wonder. This surprising young whelp, as Dr. Johnson called him, had inherited the childish Alfred's love for illuminations and missals, while at an earlier date than any known poet of our land, the nursing mother of earth's noblest singers, he had given outward and visible evidence of a fixed resolution to excel in the highest kinds of poetry. He hardly wrote anything that is quite first-rate, if we exclude possibly the *Excelent Balade of Charitie* and some of the stanzas in *Aella*; but the unique language that he invented to translate his verses into, the vein of patriotism and romance he managed to throw over the poems upon the raids on England by Danes and Normans, and the sudden flowering of undreamt-of beauties in the wilderness of his imaginative dialect, these things argue a rare originality and reveal the immaturity of an absolutely sincere poet. The prodigy of his boyish output and the pathos of his untimely end, when, having precipitated a

breach with his master in 1770, he left Bristol for London and poured forth heterogeneous verse and prose for the London booksellers at the rate of about one shilling a page, until even this rate of payment was denied him, and starvation confronting the proud spirit, he locked himself into his Holborn garret, on August 24th, 1770, and was found next morning dead, a mere boy of seventeen and three-quarter years, poisoned with arsenic, to be buried three days later in the paupers' pit of Shoe Lane Workhouse—could such circumstances as these fail to render his work more world-famous than his mere writings could ever have done? Their eloquence even more than that of his printed poems evoked the undying testimonies of Wordsworth and Shelley and Coleridge to the "sleepless soul that perished in his pride," the "half-blown flowret" sung by Keats, the "dayspring of modern romantic poetry" in the enthusiastic phrase of Rossetti, the hero of Alfred de Vigny's play, and of the exquisite and pathetic picture of Henry Wallis. The wildness of Chatterton's fantasy and the brave translunary pitch of his phrase cast its most powerful spell, however, upon the strange visionary genius of England's most fantastic, eerie, and unearthly bard—William Blake.

William Blake, poet, artist, mystic, and seer, was by far the most original of the reactionaries who preceded the Romantic Revival. Born only thirteen years after the death of Pope, he was, amongst other things, the first writer of proven genius to hark back to Elizabethan influence. Because, however, he passed most of his life in a *milieu* of artists and engravers, and because his few readers—Southey and Wordsworth, for example—considered him insane, therefore he remained isolated, had no direct literary descendants, and did nothing to bring about, or to hasten, the Romantic Revival itself. Blake was of Irish extraction. According to latter-day notions, his formal education must have been rudimentary to a scandalous degree. We know, however, that Swedenborg was studied in the household, and we learn from Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of his Child* that "the favourite studies of Mr. Blake's early days" were Shakespeare's and Ben Jonson's poems. He must also have read largely in the Bible, Shakespeare's plays, Spenser, Chatterton, and Ossian. At the age of twelve he was writing verse. How early he caught the spirit

of Elizabethan lyricism and of Elizabethan heroics is abundantly shown in the *Poetical Sketches* of 1783. James Blake did wisely by his sensitive, impulsive, visionary son. Though Tatham says that Blake's mother once beat him for asserting that he had seen Ezekiel sitting beneath a tree, he seems to have exercised his visionary faculties for the most part unmolested. He was no more than four years old when he saw "God put his forehead to the window," which, according to his wife, who afterwards repeated the tale to Tatham, "set him a-screaming." Later, in one of his long country walks, he saw angels in a tree. During the whole of his life the world of visions compassed him about.

On being taken to Ryland, the King's engraver, with a view to apprenticeship, Blake, then aged fourteen, made a prophecy which was fulfilled in a manner startling enough to shake the modern belief in the all-explanatory powers of coincidence. "The man's face looks as if he will live to be hanged," said the boy; and, twelve years later, Ryland was the last man to be hanged at Tyburn. Blake was finally apprenticed to Basire, an engraver whose firm and sound, if somewhat lifeless, work confirmed his liking for a severer art than was then in vogue. In 1778 he was, for a short time, a student under Moser in the Antique school of the Royal Academy. About 1780 he started work on his own account by engraving some of Stothard's early designs; and this year his picture, "The Death of Earl Godwin," was hung in the Royal Academy's first exhibition at Somerset House. Stothard introduced Blake to Flaxman, through whom he came to know Fuseli. For many years Flaxman remained his friend and admirer; Fuseli also. His epigrams against them are, it is true, more pointed than friendly. But the epigrams were jotted down in moments of anger, spurred by inappreciation and misunderstanding. The history of Blake's friendships is a record first of warm affection, then, apparently, of equally warm quarrels and of only half-supported accusations on his part; but, if it be recollected that he lived in his art and imagination, that artistic opposition and spiritual misunderstanding were to him what assault and battery are to the generality of men—so that if a man's lack of sympathy interfered with his visions, he was prepared to call him villain or murderer—and, further,

that he was at all times impatient of any compromise whatsoever, and vehement to defend the knowledge he had come by intuitively, then it is easy to understand that quarrels were almost inevitable, and to conclude that, however violent in expression, they were not really more blameworthy than the quarrels of other and less acutely sensitive men.

In 1784 Blake, with Parker, a fellow engraver, opened a printselling shop next door to his birthplace (28, Broad Street, Golden Square). The following year, Robert, Blake's favourite brother and pupil, died, and, giving up his share in the business, Blake moved to 28, Poland Street. Here one night the process by which he printed his works suggested itself to him, or, as he fancied, was revealed to him by Robert's spirit. The designs and text were drawn and written on metal plates with an acid-resisting varnish. After prolonged immersion in an acid bath, the parts so protected stood in relief and could be used like type, for printing in any one ground colour. Blake and his wife further coloured each copy by hand. In this way he produced books of peculiar beauty and, sometimes, of great splendour in colour; for though the colouring often diminishes the similitude to things as we see them, it almost invariably heightens the mystical effectiveness, and depicts all the more powerfully a Blakean *other-world*, none the less real in its emotional and spiritual—in its artistic—effect because all cannot see it as Blake did. By this method he produced his most exquisitely and purely lyrical book of poems, the *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and, shortly afterwards, *The Book of Thel* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

In 1791 Blake met a republican company—Godwin, Priestley, Tom Paine, and others—at the weekly dinners of Johnson the bookseller, and was the only one of them all to sally forth into the street wearing the *bonnet rouge*. About this time also began an acquaintance which lasted thirty years with Thomas Butts, who, buying Blake's works sometimes at the rate of one a week, did more than any one else to save him from destitution, and—what was more to the artist—"always left him altogether to his own judgment." Next year, after a move to Lambeth, Blake designed 537 illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts* (only forty-seven were engraved), issued a book of designs, *The Gates of Paradise*, and published two pro-

phetic books, *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* and *America, a Prophecy*. He refused the post of drawing-master to the Royal Family, preferring to remain unfettered, and in 1794 produced the *Songs of Experience; Europe, a Prophecy*; and *The Book of Urizen, Part I.*; followed in 1795 by *The Song of Los*, comprising *Africa* and *Asia*, and by *The Book of Ahania*, continuing the Urizen myth.

In 1800 Flaxman introduced Blake to William Hayley, the fatuous author of *The Triumphs of Temper*, and it was arranged that he should settle near Hayley, in a cottage at Felpham, on the coast not far from Bognor, there to engrave the illustrations for Hayley's *Life of Cowper*. For a time Blake was delighted. Later, however, Hayley's "genteel ignorance and polite disapprobation" irritated "gentle visionary Blake." On the other hand, Hayley's lack of understanding, his interference and "affected loftiness," must have been deadly indeed to Blake's imaginative life, for he used afterwards to say: "The Visions were angry with me at Felpham."

Soon after his return to London, Blake issued the last of his prophetic books that he published—*Jerusalem, The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, and *Milton*. Unfortunately he was brought into contact, in 1805, with a dishonest print-jobber and publisher, by whom he was twice tricked. Lifelong poverty was threatening to become destitution when, in 1813, Blake made the acquaintance of John Linnell, the painter, through whom he came to know John Varley, an artist interested in occultism, and other young men who became little short of disciples. It was with Varley that he did the remarkable series of Scriptural portraits—"David," "Edward III.," "The man who built the pyramids," and about forty others. Varley would suggest a subject, and with a "There he is!" Blake would proceed to draw the vision that he saw, and sometimes would say: "I can't go on—it is gone," or "It has moved; the mouth has gone."

After a last move, in 1820, to 3, Fountain Court, Strand, Blake executed some woodcuts for Thornton's *Virgil's Pastorals*, and engraved for the Book of Job a series of prints which for sustained and subtle power are unrivalled among biblical illustrations. Towards the end of 1824 he mastered enough Italian to read the *Divina Commedia*, with a view to illustrating that also. But his health was failing. Though he did enough to show

that he might yet have surpassed his Job, only seven of the Dante designs, nearly a hundred in number, and done, many of them, in bed, were engraved and published before his death. On August 12th, 1827, he sang, saw visions and was joyful; and he died calmly in the evening, being then in his seventieth year.

There has been much discussion as to whether Blake was, or was not, wholly sane, in the ordinary sense of the word. Seeing that an accurate definition of what exactly constitutes sanity has yet to be found, the discussion appears to be a little indefinite, not to say futile. Blake saw visions. For many that will be enough. The opinion of his contemporaries seems to have been fairly evenly divided. Southey called him simply "this great but insane genius." Coleridge, after a visit, "talked finely about him." Wordsworth, with greater insight than Southey, said that Blake's poems were "undoubtedly the production of insane genius; but there is something in the madness of this man that interests me more than the sanity of Lord Byron or Walter Scott." Blake's personal friends, too, were divided in opinion.

According to the rules and regulations of common sense, he was certainly crazed. An examination of his work and philosophical dicta proves him to have been something more. Super-sanity is not insanity, neither will it trot between sanity and common sense. And super-sanity, inspiration, intuition—whatever it may be called—was certainly his. In his work he expressed his visions and intuitions; and his best work possesses to so extraordinary a degree the quality of artistic truth and beauty, appeals so powerfully to the inner self, and is, in short, so marked with genius, that, whether he was or was not "crazed" or "insane," in the ordinary sense of the words, hardly matters.

The prophetic books, which Blake seems to have considered his most important work, have been largely responsible for the imputation of madness. Written in long, rhymeless, more or less metrical lines, or in a poetic prose which resembles frequently the chant of Whitman, they probably owe their form to Blake's love of Ossian, and perhaps, in part, to Milton's remarks on verse in connection with *Paradise Lost*. The designs that surround and mingle with the text are less illustrations to it than accompaniments in the spirit of it. Like most of Blake's pictorial work, they have a strange

power, portraying not so much human beings subject to emotions as passions, emotions, and fears made incarnate. With two exceptions these books appear to be not far short of chaotic, their purple patches not over-easy to find. *The Book of Thel*, however, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are comparatively explicit. The theme of the former, so far as it can be analysed, is the transiency of life and the insignificance of the individual contrasted, in Blake's own way, with the oneness of the universe—pervading, rather than acute, emotions, expressed with a wonderful power of suggestion and a sheer beauty of sound that calls up the radiant sadness of a dreamland, that is yet not a dream; or the remote, yet not unreal, place where the light of sunrise rests upon the earth.

But if there is doubt as regards the merits of Blake's prophetic books, there can be none as regards his poems proper. Defective in rhyme, metre, and grammar they sometimes are; but even with their faults, how exquisite! The *Poetical Sketches*, "commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year," show at once his effortless choice of phrase, and beauty of cadence; and contain the grandly harmonised lyrics, "I love the jocund dance," "How sweet I roamed from field to field," and "My silks and fine array." *To the Evening Star* and *To Morning* have an extraordinary felicity in diction and loveliness of metaphor; fragments of dramatic pieces are written in a blank verse which nearly approaches the Elizabethan,

yet is individual in its directness and, so to speak, its whirling swiftness; while *The Mad Song*, with its largeness and varied stormy music, reminds one of clouds scudding across the moon.

In the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, shewing the two Contrary States of the Human Soul, there are fewer faults of technique, and Blake attains his highest as a poet pure and simple.

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs,
Every child may joy to hear,

he wrote in the Introduction to the *Songs of Innocence*. The poems which follow are indeed songs of innocence, child-poetry about the fields, and "Mercy, pity, peace, and love." Anything happier and more tenderly simple than *Infant Joy* can hardly be found anywhere.

Spring, *The Blossom*, *Nurse's Song*, and *The Echoing Green* are only less perfect. They sing themselves, and have a freshness like that of the songs of nature, of streams and of birds. The best of Blake's lyrics are unsurpassed. They have the spontaneity of Elizabethan songs—their frolicsomeness, clarity, and delicacy. They are like gems, each phrase a facet flashing light. A soaring genius Blake's might well be called; for, though his thought took the profundities of the universe for subject, he was able many times to effect that supreme lyrical transmutation whereby thought becomes not the burden but the wings.¹

¹ The truth about "Ossian" is probably told most nearly in J. S. Smart's *James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature* (1905). See also the sixpenny brochure on *Ossianic Literature* by David Nutt. The best editions of Chatterton are the Aldine (ed. Skeat, 1875) and Routledge's (2 vols., ed. D. Roberts, 1906), and of the *Rowley Poems* by R. Steele (1898). There are two excellent studies of the *Life*, one by Sir D. Wilson, the other, *A Story of the Year 1770*, enlarged as *Thomas Chatterton: A Biography*, by David Masson. There is an Austrian study by Helene Richter (1900). For the Ballad Revival, see F. J. Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1857-9), and the same, ed. Sargent and Kittredge, in 1 vol. (1904),* the *Percy Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Child (1867), and Sidgwick's *Ancient Ballads* (in progress). Of Blake there are editions by W. M. Rossetti (Aldine, 1857), Ellis and Yeats (3 vols., 1893),* and John Sampson (1905), also in the Muses' Library (Selections) and ed. Perugini (Little Library, 1901) and L. Housman (1893). The writers are indebted to Mr. Stephen Reynolds for much aid in this section, especially as regards William Blake; also to Mr. Davey for suggestions.

CHAPTER XIII

LATER SCOTS POETRY: ROBERT BURNS

"The rank of Burns is the very first of his art. . . . A man may be coarse and yet not vulgar, and the reverse. Burns is often coarse but never vulgar."—LORD BYRON.

"I conceived that the moral mind and genius of Scotland were more obliged to Burns than to all her other authors taken together. . . . He confirmed my former suspicion that the world was made for me as well as for Cæsar."—JOHN YOUNGER, shoemaker.

The ancestors of Burns—Watson's *Choice Collection*—Allan Ramsay—Robert Fergusson—Burns's Life and Achievement.

THE Renaissance and the Reformation between them dealt fatal blows at the old Scots of Dunbar and Henryson. Bitten by the desire of emulating the Scaligers and Casaubons, the scholars, the famous Latinists of Scotland neglected the vernacular for the same reason that More and Bacon did, and wrote in Latin. Men of genius, like George Buchanan and James Melvill, wrote exclusively in a Latin which Dr. Johnson was perhaps the last man to read for pleasure. More serious was the general effect of the Reformation in inducing the best wits of Northern Britain to neglect pure literature for Presbyterian theology, and to anglicise their diction in order to widen the range of their lucubrations. The succession of James VI. to the English Crown, by sundering the old Scottish court, removed another powerful stimulus to national literature. The new court makers tuned their lays to harmonise with the strains of the south, the scholars wrote in Latin, the divines wrote divinity and diverged more and more from literary models of any kind. The English Bible made its way into the remotest kirks, and no northern rival was found to resist it. Writers such as Drummond and Urquhart seldom relapse into the colloquial broad Scots. The removal of 1707, when the Scots Parliament migrated to Westminster, assisted the tendency to centralisation.

And so the vernacular dwindled and ran dry, and was used scarcely at all save in an incidental way by the writers of popular songs and ballads. As for Scots prose, it may be

said to have deceased early in the seventeenth century and to have been entombed at Westminster with King Jamie in 1625.

The great Scots authors of the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, such as Thomson, Smollett, Beattie, Kames, Hume, Adam Smith, and Robertson, all wrote excellent English. The great Dr. Blair was a species of diminutive Johnson.

Yet there was always in Scotland a strong feeling of antagonism—a strong reaction against this centralising and denationalising tendency. That a few shreds of the old national music and song were preserved and pressed into the service of this local sentiment was due largely to the lively legal element which survived the removal of the Parliament from Edinburgh, and to the cultivation of the fiddle among the poor classes as the one surviving weapon of offence against the all-conquering Kirk.

Watson's *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (1706-11) embodies one of the earliest collections made of this popular poetry which had resisted the onslaughts of the "meenester." William Hamilton of Gilbertfield, Allan Ramsay, Robert Fergusson are the names pre-eminently associated with the preservation of the old poetic tradition during the half-century that preceded Burns.

Allan Ramsay (1686—1758), born on October 15th, 1686, in Crawford parish, in Lanarkshire, was roughly brought up and apprenticed by his step-father to a wig-maker in Edinburgh (1701). Shrewd and canny in every relation

of life, he soon acquired a business of his own, married and, developing a literary vein, became laureate of a small Jacobite circle known as the Easy Club. About 1717 he launched out as a bookseller at the Mercury, in High Street, and became famous for his leaflet literature, mainly verselets of his own, or *réchauffés* of old Scots song and ballad. Whatever it was, Ramsay's last piece became generally in demand. Luckily for his fame, Allan was a great admirer of the early poetry of his native country. He did not study it historically or philologically as a modern scholar would, but he was an indefatigable burrower in old manuscripts, and he had a very good idea of both the spirit and the substance of the literature of the Royal era. Thus about 1716 he fastened on a droll poem of the fifteenth century (*Christis Kirk on the Green*) attributed to James I. in the Bannatyne MS., full of broad humour and rural cantrips, and supplemented it with a vigorous and rollicking second canto of his own. Three years later came his volume of *Scots Songs*, and in 1724 the first volume of a more copious and at the same time more recondite collection to which he gave the title of *The Evergreen*. About the same time commenced another collection, called *The Tea-Table Miscellany*, containing with much old verse a number of songs and other pieces (including *Lochaber no More*) by Ramsay himself, his friends the Hamiltons, and others. In 1725, while these miscellanies were still running, appeared his pastoral drama, *The Gentle Shepherd*. In 1726 he moved from High Street to a book-shop in the Luckenbooths which with its conspicuous heads of Drummond and Ben Jonson soon became the favourite haunt of wits and men of letters in the northern capital. In 1730 he gave to the world *Fables*, and in 1737 *Scots Proverbs*. On January 7th, 1758, at the age of seventy-two, the Scots Theocritus died, full of fame, in a fine octagonal villa on the north slope of the Castle Hill, fifty-seven years having elapsed since he had come up a penniless boy from Lanarkshire. An admirable type of the long-headed Scot, eminently mundane and full of

glee ("O for a spunk o' Allan's glee"¹), with an overmastering relish for humour of the broader kind, but temperate and shrewd with a strict eye to business, and with no disturbing passion or imagination, he was clearly a man born to thrive. His one bold experiment was his mixture of Scots and English, and his incorrigible fondness for dialect in defiance of the stolid anglicised taste of the day. But his countrymen came in time to appreciate his efforts to revitalise the vernacular, and it is this part of his work that best survives.

Ramsay, as we have seen, had a great respect for the literature of the Royal and Courtly Era,² but nearer his own time he found the metrical vehicle which suited his own talent and purpose best. Rob. Sempill of Beltrees, in Renfrewshire, had written a most amusing skit on Habby Simpson, a piper of Kilbarchan who made his living by "daidlin a bag o' wind" in the clachans of the west of Scotland. These diverting rhymes, which fitted the measure employed like a glove, became familiar to every Lowlander who fancied he could warble; and subsequently, when breathed into by Fergusson and Burns, the stave's celebrity became world-wide. The Sempill stanza was no new thing; it had been used by Dunbar, by Alexander Scott (d. 1584) and others, but had never been a great favourite with the old makers. Sempill inaugurated its modern use. It consisted of six lines, of which the first, second, third, and fifth contain each four iambics; the fourth and sixth lines two apiece—the long and short lines rhyming with each other respectively. This measure proved a rare affinity with the very genius of the Doric speech of North Britain. Allan writes to incite his "witty wanton Willy" Hamilton to exercise himself in the stave:

Ye're never rugget, sham, nor kittle,
But blyth and gabby,
And hit the spirit to a tittle
Of standard Habby.

Hamilton ("Gilbertfield") took it up, and in their hands, even before it was immortalised by Burns, it became the standard stave for good-humoured satire, Bacchanalian compliment, epistolary gossip and chat-back.³ Ramsay only

¹ First Epistle to Lapraik.

² Described in Book I. chap. iv.

³ Wordsworth, Arnold, Kipling, Watson, and other masters have used it effectively, but the emphatic gutturals and broad vowelings of the Scottish tongue are needed to bring out its finest effects. See D. T. Holmes, *Lectures on Scottish Literature*, 1904, 42.

used this stave in five or six semi-comic pieces, but his mastery of it may be judged from one stanza of his eulogy of Lucky Wood :

She gaed as fait as a new preen
An kept her housie snod and bien ;
Her peuthen glanc'd upon your een
Like siller plate,
She was a sonsie wife and clean
Without debate.

Burns had already perfected his mastery of the stave when in May, 1785, he wrote that epistle to "coaxin' billie" Simson, in which, in that delightful spirit of generosity which wins him all our hearts, he recognises his debt to Ramsay and famous Fergusson :

I gat your letter, winsome Willie ;
Wi' grateful heart I thank you brawlie ;
Tho' I maun say't, I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie,
Your flatterin' strain.
My senses wad be in a creel
Should I but dare a hope to speel
Wi' Allan or wi' Gilbertfield
The braes o' fame ;
Or Fergusson the writer-chiel,—
A deathless name.

As for Robert Fergusson, of whom his great successor wrote—

O Fergusson ! thy glorious parts
Ill-suited law's dry, musty arts,
My curse upon your whunstane hearts
Ye Enbrugh gentry.
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry—

it might almost be said of him that he was a premature, immature, and miniature edition of the greater Robin.¹ As with Burns, his forte

was the vernacular and the irregular stave ; his style of treatment humorous, pathetic, and moralistic. What he lacked was Burns's male roguishness, his daring imagination, and powerful reaction against depressing conditions. Assailed by fate within and fate without, a poor lawyer's dismal drudge, possessing no reserve either of moral or of physical strength, lacking a friend to stand by him in his hour of need, he sought to forget his poor home and his aching fingers in the noisy revelry of the club-house and tavern. Thus tending to dissipation he sank into broken health, then into remorse and religious melancholy, and finally passed to a swift and distressing end in a public lunatic asylum in Edinburgh. This was on October 16th, 1774. In 1787, during the heyday of his sojourn in Edinburgh, Burns sought out the grave in the Canongate cemetery and had Fergusson's name cut upon it at his own expense. The "writer-chiel" was not twenty-four when he died, and is therefore to be ranked with Chatterton and Keats, and Chénier and Lermontov, as one of the potentialities of literature.² Fergusson's immediate legacy to Burns was a score or so of admirable models, thus :

FERGUSSON.	BURNS.
"Leith Races."	"Holy Fair."
"Mutual Complaint of Plainstones and Causey."	"Brigs of Ayr."
"Farmer's Ingle."	
"Auld Reikie."	{ "Edina, Scotia's darling seat."
"Hame Content."	
"Elegy on Death of Scots Music."	"Twa Dogs."
	"Elegy on Captain M. Henderson."

¹ In person he is described as of slender, handsome figure, his forehead high, his countenance open and pleasing, though somewhat effeminate and characterised by extreme pallor, but kindled into life by the animation of his large black eyes whenever he became interested in the conversation.

² At "nine years less than thirty, sweet one-an'-twenty," Fergusson began contributing pieces, both grave and humorous, in English and in vernacular, to *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine*. Few are distinguished by any depth of poetic feeling, but the dialect pieces show graphic humour and a descriptive power rich with promise. He excelled in descriptive pieces, modelled on those of Swift and Gay, and in poetic epistles, garnished with strong pronunciations and in the Scottish metre :

Could lavrocks, at the dawnin' day,
Could linties, chirmin' frae the spray,
Or toolin' burns that smoothly play
Ow'r gowden bed,
Compare w' Birks o' Invermay ?—
But now they're dead.

He need have been in no anxiety about the songs of Scotia, which were, as we know, upon the point of being born again. His mantle was to fall upon the shoulders of a much greater man. As the mantle of such genial caricaturists and humorists as Surtees and Marryat fell upon the shoulders of a giant (Charles Dickens), so the mantle of Gilbertfield and Fergusson fell upon Robin Burns. The fable lay comparatively inert under the successors of *Æsop* until "*Le Bonhomme*" *La Fontaine* arose and vitalised it in every part.

One can still read with a glow of genuine appreciation the elder poet's *Hallow Fair* and *Auld Reikie*, his *Epistles*, and his *Odes to the Dee and the Gowdspink*, or his delicately touched lines, *On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street* (compare Burns's *Mouse*).

The Burnes or Burness family had been yeomen on the estate of the Keiths of Kincardineshire for several generations previous to 1748, when William Burns left Clochnahill and came southward, settling at last as a small cultivator and jobbing gardener on a croft at Alloway, two miles south of Ayr. There in a small clay cottage or "biggin" the poet was born on January 25th, 1759. His father had a kindness for the old Jacobite traditions, his mother Agnes (Broun or Brown) for the antagonistic legends of persecuted hill folk and Whigamores; and Robert drew in nourishment from both sources of romantic sentiment. When he was seven, his father moved to a seventy-acre farm two miles farther south, at Mount Oliphant. This looked like prosperity, but the friendly landlord died, there was a hard factor, whose insolence (described in *The Twa Dogs*) was aggravated by the growth of debts, and consequent drudgery and physical overwork for the farmer and his sons (the poet had a younger brother Gilbert). They were taught and taught well, however, by their father¹ and by William Murdoch, who was hired by the local farmers to serve a little school at Alloway; and there Robert became "an excellent English scholar," reading Addison and the *Life of Wallace*, Richardson's *Pamela*, and Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. At sixteen, in spite of the hard grind of poverty and the "unceasing moil" of farm work, Robert's nature took a rapid development. To give his manners a brush, he went to a country dancing-school (thereby distressing his father), and it must have been about simultaneously that love and poetry began to interest him. Regularly on winter evenings, regardless of expense, a candle was lighted for reading and writing, and verses soon began to collect in a small drawer. The summer nights were spent in a far different fashion. Full-blooded and free-spoken, with lustrous eyes and wheedling tongue, Burns was perhaps the most amorous of British bards; he was as susceptible to petticoat influence as Coleridge or Keats and as dangerous as Shelley or Byron:

There's ae wee faut, they whiles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me.
For monie a plack they wheedle frae me
At dance or fair;
May be some ither thing they gie me
They weel can spare.

One of his earliest and most delightfully spontaneous effusions was his tender welcome to an illegitimate child, "wee image of my bonny Betty," and the misfortune he invoked if "Ever he blushed to hear such pledges of affection call him 'Tit-ta or daddy'" certainly never came to his call, for he remained the same "frontless" and thoughtless Robin (but never the cruel or heartless village Don Juan he has been represented) to the end of his brief career.

At Whitsun, 1777, the family moved from Mount Oliphant to Lochlie, a moorland farm near Tarbolton (eleven miles north-east). The poet had seen something of roystering companions in 1775 at Kirkoswald, where he went for a quarter to learn gauging and surveying. At Tarbolton in 1780 he entered a young farmer-bachelors' club, the chief object of which was, no doubt, to discuss the *fillettes* of the neighbourhood (the poet was always fond of a French tinge in his discourse); and next year he became a freemason and learnt to fill his glass and mix without fear in a drunken squabble; but as all this was done on his wages of £7 a year allowed him by his father, no great harm can have been done. The same year, 1781, saw his first regular disappointment in love, for he was then jilted, or at any rate finally refused, by Alison Begbie, a farmer's daughter who was a servant near by, and in whose honour he wrote *The Lass of Cessnock Banks*, *Bonnie Peggy*, and *Mary Morison*, the second stanza of which marked his high water as a poet until, while ploughing in 1782 (*at. 23*), he composed *The Death of Poor Mailie*. After a futile attempt to set up as a flax-dresser at Irvine, Burns returned to the Lochlie farm in January, 1782. But he had greatly widened his circle of acquaintance at Irvine; he had mixed in the society of genial blackguards, and he had fallen in with the poems of Robert Fergusson, now dear to all who recognise in him the straggling genius who beckoned the fuller poet into his true field of national humorous song. In February, 1784, at the age of sixty-two, William Burnes

¹ Arithmetic and religion were the subjects of instruction most congenial to William Burnes. To him they were equally exact sciences.

died at Lochlie, prematurely worn out by his brave struggle with his barren holding. Next month Robert and his brother Gilbert moved some twenty furlongs to a 118-acre farmstead at Mossgiel, near Mauchline, where Robin's finest pieces were written, 1785-6. Burns was now twenty-four years of age, and came to his full strength of limb, brain, and passion. As a young farmer on his own account, he mixed more freely than hitherto in the society of the countryside, and in a more independent fashion. He had the black eyes which Sir Walter saw afterwards in Edinburgh and remembered to have "glowed." He had wit, which convulsed the masonic meetings, and a rough-and-ready sarcasm with which he flayed his foes. Besides all this, his companionship at Irvine had borne its fruits. He had become the father of an illegitimate child, had been rebuked for his transgression before the congregation, and had, in revenge, written witty and wicked verses on the reprimand and its occasion, to his correspondent Rankine. Ayrshire was at this period a sort of theological bear-garden. The most important clergymen of the district were divided into "New Lights" and "Auld Lights," they wrangled in Church courts, they wrote and harangued against each other; and, as the adherents of the one party or the other made up almost the entire population, and as in such disputes Scotchmen take an extraordinary interest, the country was set very prettily by the ears. The Auld Light divines were strict Calvinists, laid great stress on the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and inclined generally to exercise spiritual authority after a somewhat despotic fashion. The New Light divines were less dogmatic, less inclined to religious gloom and acerbity, and they possessed, on the whole, more literature and knowledge of the world. Burns became deeply interested in the theological warfare, and at once ranged himself on the liberal side. Smarting under the indignity of the penitent stool Burns pursued the Auld Light divines with implacable satire, angry and fuming but never erratic, in *Holy Willie's Prayer*, *The Twa Herds*, *The Holy Fair*, and *The Ordination*, every line of which cut to the bone. It was the applause gained by these satires that made him realise his vocation—no longer as a countryside minstrel, but as the poet of his country. The national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet. His own manners, it

is almost needless to state, were untransformed. Undeterred by any cutty stools from his amorous pursuit of the lasses, whom he frankly warns in verse against the advances of "Rob Mossgiel," a race-meeting and the humble dance or penny-pay wedding that followed proved to Burns the starting-point of a deeper passion. Jean Armour, daughter of a mason at Mauchline, inspired it. When the news came that she was with child the poet behaved at first like one distraught. His better nature, however, as was usual with him, asserted itself, and he sent her a letter of troth-plight, which might have served as the irregular equivalent of marriage under the Scots law, had not the girl's father, a dour, hard man of the Auld Light persuasion, destroyed it to show his deep-rooted dislike of the Burns connection. The poet was never more prolific than during this period of emotional storm and stress. *The Jolly Beggars*, *Lines to a Mouse*, *Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Halloween*, *Scotch Drink*, *Twa Dogs*, *The Vision*, *To the "Unco Guid"*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, *A Dream*, and *The Brigs of Ayr* were all written between the autumn of 1785 and that of 1786. From this period also date his new regular signature:

While Highlandmen hate tolls and taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;
While *terra firma* on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns;

and his fixed determination to leave Britain and its grudging soil and climate for a transatlantic home.

As a souvenir of his rhymes which so many friends had praised, he determined to bring out his poems (of the genuine worth of which he himself, at least, had a very shrewd idea) by subscription through a printer in Kilmarnock. He may have had an afterthought that something would "turn up" as the result of the provincial celebrity of which he felt already assured.

While his volume was passing through the Kilmarnock press (whence it issued at the close of July, 1786) the poet was casting about for some means of earning a livelihood less hard and obdurate than tilling the soil. He eventually arranged with a Dr. Dayles, of Port Antonio, Jamaica, to serve for a term of three years as overseer of the negro labourers on his plantation at a salary of £30. After some



From the Painting by Alexander Nasmyth.

Robert Burns

difficulty, he secured a passage on board the *Nancy*, which was to sail from the Clyde either in September or October. He was prepared to work his passage out, but the proceeds of the Kilmarnock volume (574 copies at 3s. apiece) amounted to £20, and promoted him to the steerage (£9 9s.). His chest was already on the way to Greenock, and he himself skulking inland to avoid an affiliation suit with which the Armours menaced him, when a letter was put into his hand from one of the "Enbrugh gentry" who had risen to an enthusiastic appreciation of his poetry, and advised the maker to appeal to the wider audience of the capital.

The poet's prolific period was now over. The turning-point of his life had come. The sweet period of aristocratic recognition had arrived, in the course of which Burns (just arrived at the age of twenty-eight) was to be put to the test and tried beyond his strength. No one could have asserted with completer success or triumph than he did among the "Enbrugh gentry" (who were in general, says Carlyle urbanely, more noted for clearness of head than for warmth of heart) the dignity of native genius.¹ But the very knowledge of the comprehensiveness of his own talent was a dangerous acquisition to Burns. He was no longer contented with the happy valley of his own inspired invention. He seems to lose his poetic innocence: and partly, at any rate, to forfeit his power of making all subjects, however humble, profoundly interesting.² A certain incompatibility creeps into his life; his mind grows at variance with itself—the divinity of

his rustic, pagan Muse is no longer sacred in his eyes.

The first Edinburgh Edition of the Poems appeared about April 15th, 1787, and was twice reprinted that year. On the proceeds of the first batch of subscriptions the poet made a leisurely pilgrimage through Caledonia. He set out on a Border excursion in May; in June he rambled among the western Highlands; in August he perambulated the northern Highlands; and in October he made a final tour in the Ochils. Early in 1788 took place his amorous correspondence with Clarinda (Mrs. McLehose).³ The dilatoriness of his publisher, Creech, was perhaps the prime cause of his lingering about in Edinburgh all this winter. It was not until March, 1788, that their accounts were squared and that Burns tore himself away from the fascinations of Clarinda and the flatteries of his toping and other "Enbrugh cronies." In August, 1788, he was legally married to Jean Armour at the Kirk session of Mauchline, and, in December, the married pair ("I hae a wife o' my ain") began their home life together at Elliesland, a small farm six miles up the Nith from Dumfries, which was leased from Patrick Millar, of Dalswinton. The "golden days" of Elliesland were not destined, unfortunately, to be protracted. Burns would never have made a successful nigger-driver. The numerous distractions caused by curious visitors, the "fashionable dangles after literature," and by the duties which he assumed as a gauger in November, 1789, necessitated his reliance to some extent upon hired hands, of whose efficiency a neigh-

¹ How vigorously this peasant of genius impressed the directing class of his day is conveyed to us in a passage of Lockhart, upon which it would be difficult to improve: "It needs no effort of imagination to conceive what the sensations of an isolated set of scholars (almost all either clergymen or professors) must have been in the presence of this big-boned, black-browed, brawny stranger, with his great flashing eyes, who, having forced his way among them from the plough-tail at a single stride, manifested in the whole strain of his bearing and conversation a most thorough conviction that in the society of the most eminent men of his nation he was exactly where he was entitled to be; hardly deigned to flatter them by exhibiting even an occasional symptom of being flattered by their notice; by turns calmly measured himself against the most cultivated understandings of his time in discussion; overpowered the *bon-mots* of the most celebrated convivialists with broad floods of merriment, impregnated with all the burning life of genius; astounded bosoms habitually enveloped in the thrice-piled folds of social reserve, by compelling them to tremble—nay, to tremble visibly—beneath the fearless touch of natural pathos; and all this without indicating the smallest willingness to be ranked among those professional ministers of excitement, who are content to be paid in money and smiles for doing what the spectators and auditors would be ashamed of doing in their own persons, even if they had the power of doing it; and last, and probably worst of all, who was known to be in the habit of enlivening societies which they would have scorned to approach, still more frequently than their own, with eloquence no less magnificent; with wit in all likelihood still more daring; often enough, as the superiors whom he fronted without alarm might have guessed from the beginning, and had ere long no occasion to guess, with wit pointed at themselves."

² Preceding Wordsworth's theories on the subject by nearly a dozen years of successful practice.

³ For whom in December, 1791, he wrote "Ae fond kiss."

bouring farmer gives a somewhat sceptical account. "The lasses did nothing but bake bread, and the lads sat by the fireside and ate it warm with ale." At every carousal within fifty miles, Burns, who spent more and more of his time on horseback, was called in to be chairman, and we are hardly surprised to read of his desertion of the book for the bowl. The margin of profit on a small lowland farm was always calculated upon a very narrow basis, and although farming profits as a whole were mounting, the poet was not to share in the rise. From Elliesland, where he had written *Tam o' Shanter* ("the best day's work done in Scotland since Bannockburn"), and began those sweet warblings of Scottish song which he contributed to Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* and afterwards to George Thomson's *Collection* (opening out with such masterly strains as *Of a' the Airts* and *Auld Lang Syne*, 1788; *John Anderson* and *Willie brew'd a peck o' maut*, 1789), after a last grand carousal Burns moved finally in November, 1791, to a small three-room house in Dumfries.

His salary as gauger was advanced to £70, and he seems to have had good chance of promotion, in spite of certain political petulancies and vivacities which it were charitable to call indiscreet. As an executive officer, however, he combined humour and kindness with no lack of energy upon active service. On February 27th, 1792, Burns was dispatched to watch an armed smuggler which had got into shallow water in the Solway Firth. He was left on guard while his superior officer went to Dumfries for some dragoons. While watching he composed the song :

The de'il cam fiddling thro' the town,
And danc'd awa wi' th' exciseman;
And ilka wife cries "Auld Mahown,
I wish you luck of the prize man!"

When the soldiers came he led them to the assault of the lugger, and was first on board. Personages or incidents supplied the spark to his genius more often than mood or reverie, but the echo from an old song was most frequently of all the source of inspiration; and while he was at Dumfries, though the rate of production was less than at Mauchline, he wrote some of his finest songs, among them "Ae fond kiss," "Ye banks and braes," "O my luve's like a red, red rose," "She is a winsome wee thing," the splendid "For a' that," and "Scots wha hae,"

composed in riding across the wilds of Kenmure with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forebore to speak—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. He felt that he would be humiliated by writing these songs—many of them patriotic songs—to order for money, and consequently would not receive a penny-piece for any of them.

His salary enabled him to live in tolerable comfort, his income amounting to a little under £100 a year. In May, 1793, he moved to rather a better house in the town. But his indulgence in hard drinking, and the constant excitement of various kinds to which his life was now subject, began to tell upon his powerful frame. In January, 1796, he fell asleep in the open air after returning from a carouse at the Globe Tavern, and caught rheumatic fever; he rallied several times, but sank very rapidly in July; and died on July 21st, 1796, at the age of thirty-seven. He was buried on the 26th in St. Michael's kirkyard. His wife survived him forty years. "His true life began with his death; with the body passed all that was gross and impure; the clear spirit stood revealed, and soared at once to its accepted place among the fixed stars in the firmament of the rare immortals."

Incommensurate as his work is with his genius, Burns is undoubtedly one of our major poets. There were tragedies, among the poets who succeeded him, of attempts at expression thwarted by adverse conditions, but of all these tragedies Burns's is the hardest. Brief, broken glimpses of a genius that could never show itself complete, his poems wanted all things for completeness; culture, leisure, sustained effort, nay, even length of life. Occasional, fragmentary, and unpremeditated as most of his pieces are, they bear the guinea-stamp of unmistakable genius—poetic genius of the strongest and most universal kind. The eye of Burns is almost terrible for its calm and cool insight. About his expression there is a laconic pith and racy vigour which strikes to the very marrow of the popular understanding. Burns had no school or college education, but he had by nature the strong nervous style of a Shakespeare, a Swift, or a Cobbett which enabled him to appeal to the very heart of his people. Poor folk spent their last shilling on the Kilmarnock volume; parents and guardians had to lock the poet

up to prevent their young people "reading him on the Sabbath." Every poor man felt himself an inch or two taller, a little less of a cipher in the world's affair after reading *The Twa Dogs*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, or "Is there for honest poverty." The masculinity of his wit, the open-handed candour of his utterance, the rash generosity of his whole nature make the personality of this peasant-bard (for he is no impersonal genius like Shakespeare) exceptionally near and dear to us. He seems to be able to speak so much plainer than a scholar can, without losing a scholar's precision, so unerring is his eye, so keen is his verbal dexterity. He does not ever *want* to muffle his meaning. He is not struck dumb by the displacement of a petticoat and the view of his Muse's leg, which he compares with that of his wife. He can talk glibly and quite shamelessly about a louse, or a delicious armful. It is not his function to look upon nature with a languorous and romantic eye: his glance is swift, correct, and almost photographic. Every one is familiar with the strong yet melancholy face of the poet, his wonderful power of humorous tirade, his great personal strength, his masculine and convivial weaknesses, his extraordinary faculty of fascinating both men and women of every class and every order of intellect. Of every society he mingled in, this thick-set little diable of a man, with his coal-black eyes and hair—like Napoleon twenty and Dickens fifty years later—proved himself to be the unmistakable lord and master. He was genius all compact, a genius of the first order.

As to the relative shortcoming in his achievement, the right clue, we are convinced, was discovered by Carlyle. Burns is too great or too small a man to be satisfied with the limitations of the finite career that was possible to him. Like Shakespeare and Scott he wanted to serve both his Muse and Mammon, and he lacked the requisite binary apparatus. He was not content to remain an artist, a seer, the greatest poet of a provincial dialect. His insight into human nature franked him as a man of the world, and he could not be wholly content with the singing robes beyond which Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson had no earthly ambition. To a man of his wit and capacity was due, he felt, in the course of nature the full use of the cornucopia of enjoyment and experience. For this partially

vitiating ambition, which must to some extent have impaired the single-minded freshness of his imagination, the Edinburgh visit seems, in some subtle, but not wholly inexplicable manner, to have been largely responsible. Burns became a gambler with life. What is really wonderful is that between the throws of the dice he was able to leave us such animated perceptions, such brilliant glintings, such exquisite spontaneous flakes of the humorous and poetic elements in life and nature. Supreme though he is in his own "little Valclusa Fountain" of song, unrivalled as he is in displaying his packman's budget of satirical mirth, Burns is, upon the whole, with Byron, the least specialised and concentrated of great poets; he fell short of the single eye of the true poetic faith. The contrariness of human life has seldom played tricks with a finer faculty. As it is, we have much to be positively grateful to him for; his roguish daring and sincerity, his just sense of human equality, his patriotism. A word or two may be said in particular about his love of the poor and his regret for the poverty of his upbringing and of his masterly (scientific rather than sentimental) sense of outdoor life and outdoor doings.

A most important characteristic of Burns is his love of the poor and popular freedom. For the abstract ideas of 1789 about which Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the chorus of English bards raved he showed little intelligent sense and less fervour. He cared but little for the lofty ideals of fraternity and social regeneration, and understood less. But with the popular side of the great upheaval he was, heart and soul, sympathetic. He believed in equality of opportunity and in revolt against existing unfairness wherever the weakness of the oppressor might render it feasible. Of the divine right or eternal merit of the system under which the poor man sweats to put money into the rich man's pocket and fights to keep it there, and is despised in proportion to the amount of his perspiration, he had a low opinion. Of funded wealth in the shape of rank and fashion he had an uneasy dislike and suspicion. Both by nature and condition he was an insurgent, a hater of social distinction and of the rich. He regarded the well-to-do largely as do-nothings, for whose futile luxury he expressed in *The Twa Dogs* his hearty contempt:

A country fellow at the plough,
 His acres till'd, he's right enough;
 A country lassie at her wheel,
 Her dizzens done, she's unco weel;
 But gentlemen, an' ladies warst,
 Wi' ev'ndown want o' wark are curst.
 They loiter, lounging, lank, and lazy;
 The deil haet ails 'em, yet uneasy;
 Their days insipid, dull and tasteless;
 Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless:
 And e'en their sports, their balls, an' races,
 Their galloping thro' public places;
 There's sic parade, sic pomp an' art
 The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

In his easy description to his friend Thomson in January, 1795, of the verses beginning "Is there for honest poverty" as a mere "bagatelle," we discern the attempt of genius to disguise the intensity of conviction conveyed in the famous lines:

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts, and stares, and a' that,
 Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that;
 For a' that, and a' that,
 His riband, star, and a' that,
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that.
 A king can mak a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Guid faith, he mauna fa' that;
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities, and a' that,
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
 Are higher rank than a' that!

The sentiment, expressed with all the epigrammatic neatness of Pope in the couplet,

Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow;
 The rest is all but leather or prunella,

assumes in Burns likewise¹ a thoroughly characteristic form, in this generous and heartfelt outburst against the rising tide of subservience to wealth, ancient or modern.

Another very distinctive feature of Burns as a poet is not so much his love of nature and animals as the genuine animation of his pictures of outdoor doings—the keen and sparkling impressionism of his homely yet vivid touches of rural life. He is the poet of things seen and shared in, and he represents the busy life of the fields in verse as Blackmore, in his inspired moments, has depicted it in prose. A busy place is assigned to animals, for the still life of nature is little to his taste. Compare his animated

picture of autumn-time in *The Brigs of Ayr* with Keats's inspired rhapsody, *To Autumn*. The brisk air of country life pervades the one; the other is a dream of beauty and regret. As in Tolstoi's famous description of a day's reaping, so there are vivid touches abounding in Burns which sum up an infinite amount of generalised experience. Such are his descriptions of harvesters and gleaners, or of the gardener shouldering his spade to work in the purple May morning. He has expressed with conscious power and precision that which thousands of men who labour and delve the earth have felt obscurely and confusedly for centuries past. Contrast his ploughman with Thomson's, his woodman with Cowper's, his blacksmith with Longfellow's, and we realise how distinct his intimate knowledge is from the sympathetic imagination of the enlightened and cultured bourgeois. Beautiful though the reapers' scene in *The Seasons* is, one realises once and for all after reading Burns that Jemmy Thomson never straddled for ten hours a day for a month in a harvest-field carrying forward his ridge.

Of abstract sentiment for nature Burns had little, nor was he in the full sense of the word, like Wordsworth, or Keats, or Tennyson, a poet of nature. He had little or none of that divining power wherewith the genius of a spot is ascertained, and its moral influence gauged. Shelley, with his extraordinary, intense, and penetrative imagination, reveals with an intimate swoop the very psychology of nature. In Tennyson's *In Memoriam* a philosophy of nature is somehow interpenetrated by the mystical feeling of confidence that underlies the poem as a whole. Wordsworth walks through nature as if he were in a cathedral, where religious ceremonies are to be seen, of which he cannot indeed penetrate the full meaning, but of which the solemn character calms his spirit and profoundly affects his whole moral nature. With Burns it was utterly different. Nature had not the same mystic balm for him. He was comparatively indifferent or impervious to its healing power. The interpretation of nature's subtler moods and phases was to him no sacred task. Nature was to him, as to Romney or Gainsborough, primarily material for an effective background, to be powerfully if summarily stippled into the portrait group, rather than, as to a Turner or a Ruskin, a theme for independent poetic treat-

¹ Both here and in the *Saturday Night*—"an honest man's the noblest work of God."



From a Painting by Charles Martin Hardie, R.S.A.
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The Meeting of Burns and Scott

ment. Magician as he was, of the calibre of Gerard Dou in his mastery of candlelight effects, he often dispensed with the adjunct of background altogether. He was not, in short, occupied by nature for its own sake. It is this indifference to the religion of nature that distinguishes him most from the poets of Wordsworth's century; but he also stands apart from them in that he is rarely meditative, still less metaphysical or religious, and wholly ignorant of the pathways of philosophic doubt.

The attempts of middle-class critics to remodel Burns in their own image can never be attended with success. Noble, impulsive, improvident, his virtues and vices alike were just the opposite of those of the tradesman class. A regret may have lurked behind the poet's contemptuous astonishment at the wonderful self-restraint of the great middle class.

O ye dounce folk that live by rule,
Brave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives a dyke

But could such an insurgent genius as Burns have existed amid the dams and the drains, the prim barriers, the rectangular flats, and middle levels of such a fenland of the emotions? The answer is as frank and inevitable as the poet's verse. Sworn foe to sobriety and to prose of every kind, nothing shall stop the flow of his rhyme.

The rising moon began to glow'r,
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre,
To count her horns wi' all my pow'r
I set mysel';
But whether she had three or four
I cou'd na tell.

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows
As weel's I may;
Sworn foe to Sorrow, Care, and Prose,
I rhyme away.

A fig for those by law protected,
Liberty's a glorious feast;
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

The most celebrated editions of Burns's *Poems* are the Kilmarnock (1786), Edinburgh (1787), London (1787), Edinburgh and London (1793), Alex. Smith's (1833), Aldine (3 vols., 1893), and Centenary * (1896); of the *Poems, Life and Letters*, Currie's (1800), Allan Cunningham's (1834), W. Scott Douglas's (1882), Chambers and Wallace's * (1896). The best biographies are Lockhart's (1828) and the French Life by Auguste Angellier (2 vols., 1893). Among the more notable essays are those by John Wilson, Carlyle, R. L. Stevenson, Lord Rosebery, and J. M. Robertson. There is a *Burns Primer* by Craigie (1896) and an *Outline Bibliography* by Angus (1899). See also Henderson's *Scottish Vernacular Literature* (1898), Veitch's *Feeling for Nature in Scottish Poetry* (1887), Hugh Walker's *Three Centuries of Scottish Literature* (1893), and J. S. Blackie's *Scottish Song* (1889).



BOOK VI
ROMANCE



From the Painting by Henry William Pickersgill, R.A.

William Wordsworth

CHAPTER I

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

"The grand truth which pervades Wordsworth's poetry is that the beautiful is not confined to the rare, the new, the distant—to scenery and modes of life open only to the few; but that it is poured forth profusely on the common earth and sky, that it gleams from the loneliest flower, that it lights up the humblest sphere, that the sweetest affections lodge in lowliest hearts, that there is sacredness, dignity, and loveliness in lives which few eyes rest on—that, even in the absence of all intellectual culture, the domestic relations can quietly nourish that disinterestedness which is the element of all greatness, and without which intellectual power is a splendid deformity. Wordsworth is the poet of humanity, he teaches reverence for our universal nature; he breaks down the factitious barriers between human hearts."—W. E. CHANNING.

"Wordsworth, the great poet, is coming to town: he is to have apartments in the Mansion House. He says he does not see much difficulty in writing like Shakespeare if he had a mind to try it. It is clear that nothing is wanting but the mind. Even Coleridge was a little checked at this hardihood of assertion."—CHARLES LAMB's *burlesque of Wordsworth's "Self-Rapture."*

Sketch of his life—Meeting with Coleridge—The *Lyrical Ballads*—The *Excursion*—*Sonnets*—The poet of Nature—Poetic diction—His excellences and limitations.

WILLIAM, second son of John Wordsworth, an attorney, was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland on April 7th, 1770. Cockermouth itself is just outside the magic region of Lakeland, but the blue mountains in the distance, the sublime peaks of Borrowdale and Buttermere, raise aloft a signal, as it were, of a new country, a country of romance and mystery to which the thoughts of imaginative youth twice sixty years since were constantly turning.

In 1778 Wordsworth's mother died and in the same year he was sent to the grammar school founded by Archbishop Sandys at Hawkshead close to Esthwaite Lake, where he remained boarding in the cottage of a village dame for about six years. An austere and unsociable boy he developed great sturdiness of limb, became a great walker and skater (on Esthwaite Water) and made a large tract of mountain country his playground, frequently chanting Goldsmith and Gray to himself in the course of his rambles. Under William Taylor (idealised as the "Matthew" of his poems, the old man "with hair of glittering grey" of the *Two April Mornings*) and other masters he became a good Latin scholar; he read for his amusement in Fielding, Swift,

Cervantes, and Le Sage. At the same time he thoroughly imbibed the local sentiment of the rural society of independent dalesmen, the typical class of a district which, as he says,

Retaineth more of English homeliness
Than any other nook of ancient ground.

Scott was hardly more a product of the Border country than Wordsworth of the Lake District. But while Scott was filling his mind with picturesque historical imagery, Wordsworth was indulging in vague reveries, and was, before he was a grown man, already something of a recluse.

Before his fourteenth year was complete Wordsworth had lost his father, who left his children little save a large claim for an unpaid loan made to Lord Lonsdale. His lordship bluntly refused to pay, but two guardian uncles came to the rescue and managed to scrape together sufficient money to send William and his younger brother Christopher (afterwards Master of Trinity) to Cambridge. The poet was entered at St. John's College in October, 1787.

At Cambridge he did not aim at University distinctions ("he was not for that hour or for that place"), but read classical authors for

pleasure, studied Italian under an acquaintance of the poet Gray, Agostino Isola, learned some French and a little Spanish.

The periods most stimulating to his mind were the long vacations: the summer of 1788 was spent among the English Lakes; in 1789 he wandered amid the beautiful scenery of Derbyshire and Yorkshire with his sister Dorothy and her friend Mary Hutchinson (his "phantom of delight"); in 1790, his "third summer" at college, during the second year of the Revolution in France, he accomplished with his friend Robert Jones a pedestrian tour, unusual at that time, through France, Switzerland, and the Italian lakes, returning by the Rhine.¹

After taking his degree he spent some time sight-seeing in London, and had thoughts successively of adopting the law, the ministry, and even the army as a vocation. As with so many young men who are destined to join the army of authors, his thoughts gravitated towards a travelling tutorship. For this, it was needful in the first place to acquire a mastery of French, and having a year's maintenance in his pocket, Wordsworth again set out for France in November, 1791. For a time during his residence at Blois he was distracted a little between the parties who sought eagerly to conciliate the goodwill of an Englishman—for an Englishman was then, to a continental, a passed politician.

The ninth, tenth, and eleventh books of his autobiographical *Prelude* reveal how his republican dream gradually faded. Later he came to see that

The soil of common life was at that time
Too hot to tread on.

But for the time being the issue seemed a simple one enough. On the one hand, the liberty and rough social equality to which he in Cumberland and Cambridge had never been a stranger (for of the servitudes in favoured England he knew little); on the other, despotism with its train of idle noblesse, tax-gatherers, and "hunger-bitten" peasants. It was some time before these transitory elements of disturbance passed wholly away and Wordsworth returned to his habitual conservatism and to that normal state in which he was less responsive to the conflicts of nations than to "nature's daily face."

¹ His first studies of English landscape are embodied in his early poem *An Evening Walk*; his continental travel furnished the material for *Descriptive Sketches*.

From the epoch of the rise of Bonaparte, liberty appeared to him to be no longer enshrined in France. The defence of European liberty against the Napoleonic tyranny now seemed to him to be the special vocation of his native land, and Pitt's response to this ideal converted him into an English patriot; and when at length Napoleon was overcome, the poet looked upon the victory not primarily as a military achievement, but as a triumph of moral forces. His republicanism had virtually evaporated by the end of the century, and the poet was qualified in the eyes of *The Edinburgh* for the insulting term of "renegade."

Wordsworth's two first poetical admirers were his sister Dorothy, the nymph of modern nature-worship, who helped to develop in him the inward eye to interpret the visible signs of nature which he had worshipped from boyhood:

She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares, and delicate fears,
A heart the fountain of sweet tears,
And love and thought and joy;

and secondly Raisley Calvert, the son of the steward of the Duke of Norfolk, who was in close communion with the Wordsworths during 1793-4, and who on his death in 1795 left the poet a legacy of £900. Upon this small capital the poet settled with his sister at Racedown, near Crewkerne in Dorset, in the autumn of 1795. In a small cottage at Racedown he devoted himself wholly to poetical composition and wrote the dramatic poem *The Borderers* and *The Ruined Cottage*, afterwards incorporated in the first book of *The Excursion*.

An enthusiastic young visionary and versifier named Coleridge had been attracted by Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches*, and by the end of 1795 he had made Wordsworth's personal acquaintance. In June, 1797, he walked to Racedown from Nether Stowey, *viâ* Bridgewater, and found in Wordsworth "the greatest man he ever knew"—he himself felt a little man beside him. The inter-communication of poems on this memorable occasion led to the most fruitful poetical friendship of modern times. In July Wordsworth and his "exquisite sister" returned the visit, and at Nether Stowey met Charles Lamb on a short holiday visit, and next month, upon the in-

ducement of Coleridge's society, took a small house at Alfoxden, within three miles of Coleridge's home.

For thirteen months amid the coombes of the Quantocks they were "as three persons with one soul." The nature of their intimacy is revealed in Coleridge's exquisite lines in *The Nightingale*; and the "gulf stream which rose in the Quantocks warmed and is still warming distant shores."

The proximate outcome of their daily walks was the *Lyrical Ballads*, the germ of which was sown on the day when Coleridge, listening to the *Guilt and Sorrow*, was "arrested by Wordsworth's original gift of spreading the atmosphere of the ideal world over familiar forms and incidents, and making them as if they were not familiar." The scheme of a joint poem, which developed into a joint volume of poems, was started in November, 1797, with the composition of *The Ancient Mariner*, which Coleridge very soon took exclusively into his own hands. It was to represent the mystical, symbolical, and transcendental beauty of the romantic and supernatural poems of a bygone age in the ballad style, while Wordsworth's poems were to illustrate the same principle, the inward spiritual meaning and supernatural beauty, in familiar things of every day expressed in language of homely simplicity and truth. The work was to be rapidly executed and sold to defray the expenses of a projected tour in Germany. In rapidity of composition Coleridge was a veritable hare, but he was soon tired, and the lion's share in the volume fell to Wordsworth, whose complementary poems occupy the whole volume which began with *The Ancient Mariner* and ended with the *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*, with the exception of three short pieces. Wordsworth, who was regarded with some suspicion as a revolutionary character in a quiet neighbourhood, had notice to quit Alfoxden. The proofs were corrected during the summer of '98, however, and a sum of £30 was advanced upon them by the friendly bookseller Cottle, who brought out *Lyrical Ballads* in the middle of September, 1798, a few days after the friends had started upon their continental cruise. This volume of *Lyrical Ballads* was not only to sound the knell of the regnant poetical diction, which, ex-cogitated originally by the profound Renaissance scholarship of Milton, had been hardened, narrowed, and polished to the compactness of

a formula by the school of Pope; it was also to express the watchword and short creed of a new cult of the emotions in relation to nature. It was not likely that the destinies of this new religion of the poetic faculties should be realised and welcomed at once by the constituted authorities in criticism. Nevertheless, the leading critical organ of those days, *The Monthly Review*, in May, 1799, gave it a fairly cordial reception. It is true that it could not make anything of *The Ancient Mariner*, which it took to be the strangest and most unintelligible tale of a cock and bull, while it dismissed *We are Seven* as "innocent and pretty infantine prattle," and complained of the perverse artificiality of importing counterfeit rust into modern poetry, when the sweet and polished models of Dryden and Pope existed to exhibit to all the world the perfection of poetic style.

On the other hand it warmly welcomed Coleridge's *Nightingale* and many of Wordsworth's poems, including *Lines on the First Mild Day of March*, *Simon Lee*, and *Tintern Abbey*. The *Ballads*, moreover, sold fairly well. The cultured public who had read Cowper were by no means wholly unprepared for the theories of Wordsworth. The hostile manifestations of contempt which came later from the latitude of Edinburgh expressed the trend of current opinion less than the severe, exclusive and more or less consciously reactionary views of a small and iconoclastic but, as it happened, potent group of critical theorists.

On the eve of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth set out with his sister and Coleridge for Hamburg in the hope that their imperfect acquaintance with the language of Romance might be improved by the heroic remedy of a winter at Goslar. Coleridge soon left the Wordsworths, though he kept up a warm correspondence with them. His aim was to acquire a thorough knowledge of German. Wordsworth's aims, as always, were primarily poetic rather than linguistic, and from this point of view his four months of frost-bound sojourn at Goslar were anything but unproductive; they were indeed in a sense "the very bloom of his poetic career." For during them he wrote *Lucy Gray*, and *Ruth*, and *Nutting*, and *The Poet's Epitaph* and other of the finest pieces in the second, or revised, volume of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in which the highest standard of poetic beauty that he ever reached

was most fully maintained. Here it was, too, that he planned and began to write the intimate poetical autobiography which he finished as *The Prelude* in 1805, though it was not published until after his death some forty-five years later. He came back to England in 1799 and settled in a cottage at Grasmere.

His external life henceforth was not of the eventful order. Moving to Dove Cottage, as the new house was called at Townend, Grasmere, in December, 1799, after a short stay with his connections the Hutchinsons of Sockburn-on-Tees, Wordsworth, as fully resolved as ever to submit to no thralldom which would interfere with his vocation, settled down to the composition of poetry, mainly about himself, for he was now working at *The Prelude*, which was to form the portico of a vast epic treating of the unfolding mind of a poetic "recluse." His sister, meanwhile, in her journals frequently recorded little effects of scene and colour, or humble incidents of country life which afforded him the texts he required for his shorter poems. Coleridge saw them frequently, and settled at Keswick in July, 1800. The enlarged edition of *Lyrical Ballads* came out in 1800. Two years later the second Earl of Lonsdale repaid the debt which his predecessor had owed to the Wordsworth family, amounting with compound interest to not less than £8,500. Some £3,000 fell to the share of Wordsworth and his sister, and the enhanced income enabled the poet to wed Mary Hutchinson of the Sockburn family, a sweet and sensible woman of the same age approximately as himself, notable for native dignity rather than personal beauty, whom he had known from childhood, and whom he celebrated in the lines "She was a phantom of delight." In August, 1803, leaving his wife at Grasmere with her newborn baby, he set out for a walking tour in Scotland with Coleridge

and his sister Dorothy (whose journal of the tour was published in 1874). Coleridge left them after a fortnight, and they finished up the tour—which gave impressions that developed into some of the most perfect of Wordsworth's creations, such as *The Highland Reaper*—by paying a visit at Lasswade to Scott, who returned the compliment by a visit to Grasmere in 1805. Early in this year Wordsworth mourned deeply the loss of his brother John, captain of an East Indiaman, and in May he finished *The Prelude* in upwards of 9,000 lines of blank verse. Dove Cottage was now all too small for the growing family; in 1809 it was occupied by De Quincey, and after a stay in a farmhouse belonging to Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton and a four-years' tenure of Allan Bank and the parsonage, Grasmere, the Wordsworths moved early in 1813 to the final home at Rydal Mount. In May, 1807,¹ had appeared in two volumes a collection of his finest poems, including the great *Odes*, *Brougham Castle*, *The Happy Warrior*, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," *The Afflictions of Margaret*, the *Highland Poems*, and *Miscellaneous Sonnets*,² and in 1814 came *The Excursion*, which carries on in a large but still fragmentary manner the vast themes of *The Recluse*, the projected philosophical poem to which *The Prelude* in its fourteen books served merely as a preface.

Wordsworth pursued the even tenor of his pre-ordained course without deviation, and produced in 1814, as we have seen, the most Wordsworthian of all his productions in *The Excursion*, which was to provoke in its turn from the doyen of contemporary critics the famous phrase, "This will never do" (*The Edinburgh*, November, 1814). A repetition of the offence was not, unhappily, in the poet's power. The effort marked the culmination

¹ The *Poems* of 1807 were described by *The Edinburgh* as belonging to a certain brotherhood of whining and hypochondriacal poets who had haunted for some years the lakes of Cumberland, pouring out in slovenly and incorrect verse their obscure ecstasies about spades and sparrows' eggs, porringers and washing-tubs, men gathering leeches or women in duffil cloaks! Such pitiful trash was nothing short of an insult to the public! Such is the reception which a new poetic, not less than a new religious, creed seems destined for all time to encounter.

² Wordsworth produced over 520 sonnets. From 1791 to 1802, after green and raw attempts of youth, he eschewed the sonnet as a boylike absurdity. In 1802 a reading aloud of Milton's sonnets changed his mind! He began experimenting and soon produced *Westminster Bridge* and "Milton, thou should'st be living." He does not strictly observe the volta (or pause and break in the meaning) at the end of the octave. He varies the octave in what would now be considered a very licentious way, though it was done by Dante and Petrarch—on the whole it must be admitted, in the interests of freedom in rhyming, so much harder to attain in English than in Italian. Unfortunately, too, he misused the sestet, often employing rhyming couplets, and often using rhymes already used in the quatrains. Upon the whole, however, as an inspired sonneteer of single sonnets and as a contriver of sonnet sequences he has had no rivals (even among the Rossetti group) since Milton.

of his poetical career; he had gradually abandoned the thought of carrying out the larger and complete design of *The Recluse*. Henceforth the vigour of his poetic sensibility was slowly but unmistakably to decline, though as a result of a classical revival in his mind induced by teaching Virgil to his son, he issued the magnificent *Laodamia* in 1815, and the wonderful sequence of sonnets known after the River Duddon were composed and published in 1820. Flashes of his noblest style were seen occasionally, it is true, quite as late as 1835, when he produced the great extempore lines upon the death of the Ettrick Shepherd—a worthy elegy and lament for the makers of a poetic age without parallel.

Wordsworth's life at Rydal Mount after the publication of *Peter Bell* in 1819 and *The River Duddon* in 1820 can be briefly told. He made a number of foreign tours, was occasionally feasted in a modest manner by his admirers in London, and had the inevitable quarrel with Coleridge.¹

His own concern as a poet, as he had always felt, was with posterity, and in this respect he had an assured conviction that he would outlive all his contemporaries. Who now can say that he was wrong? Twenty years had barely elapsed since Jeffrey's "This will never do" when the tide began to turn very strongly—not at all in favour of the critic. Disciples were springing up in most unexpected quarters, among bankers and professors of the dismal science. Cultured people began to settle in Lakeland in order to breathe what was felt to be a specially refined and elevated air. The name of Wordsworth became a talisman and a spell among the younger men at the Universities, especially at Oxford, where he was granted the D.C.L. in 1839. His home life remained singularly happy, for though he had lost the society of his sister he retained the serene love and devotion of his wife:

She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

In 1847, however, the prospect was darkened for him by the irreparable loss of his daughter, another Dorothy, or as she was called in distinction "Dora" (Mrs. Quillinan), whom he loved with a passionate and jealous affection. The poet completed his eightieth year on April 7th, 1850, and died peacefully sixteen days later on St. George's Day, alike the birth and death day of the only poet whose supremacy he could have acknowledged. He was buried beside his children in Grasmere churchyard on April 27th. His wife survived him nearly ten years. For the last fifty years of his life the poet had been hard at work, correcting, diversifying, smoothening, lengthening, and abbreviating his poems.

Like Thomson, Wordsworth was a nature poet by instinct and by choice, and like so many youths in the century of Rousseau he was haunted by a passionate love of external nature from his earliest boyhood. As he grew up he discovered that the poetic diction of the past century had ignored the beauties of earth and stream and sky in their more intimate and individual aspects; the delicate traits of upland and lowland, of flower and plant had been completely missed owing to the outworn and generalised phraseology which the poets had too often felt themselves bound by obsolete trade-laws to employ. He resolved at an early date that he would describe these unrecorded aspects of nature, as faithfully as he could observe them, with all the metrical resources that Gray, Goldsmith, and Cowper could suggest. The result is seen in an early poem such as *An Evening Walk*. In 1797 association with the choice and kindling spirit of Coleridge developed in Wordsworth's mind, which was already fermenting with them, a number of ideas of capital importance to his poetic art. Emotions could be evoked, no doubt, by fine descriptions of those natural beauties which had alike been a source of keen delight to the poet and to many who were innocent of poetic craft. The sounding cataract, he says,

¹ In regard to pecuniary matters Wordsworth always cultivated a sublime improvidence, usually imputed as an unpardonable sin to poets, but in his case justified by the event, for in 1813, when his children were beginning to grow up and needed education, he obtained a semi-sinecure post as distributor of stamps (£400 per annum) through the agency of Lord Lonsdale, and when he had to abandon this in 1842 a civil list pension of £300 was promptly obtained for him. From 1843 upon Southey's death he obtained an additional £100 as Poet Laureate, accepting the office upon the express stipulation that no birthday odes or other official verse should be required of him. His poems were by this time perhaps bringing him in almost as much as his pensions, but he never attained fully to the position of being the popular poet—his public fame being eclipsed successively by Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Tennyson.

Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite.

But how much deeper a chord of emotion would be struck could the poet go on to indicate, however faintly, those mysterious moods and currents which seem to draw men at certain moments into a communion with nature :

In hours of weariness sensations sweet
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart.

In the fatigue and the weariness of modern life a complex humanity needs to be taken to the lap of Mother Nature and crooned over with some such lays of a common past and an indistinguishable future as he alone seems to have found the secret of. A subtle suggestion of correspondence and sympathy between the blithe spirit of flowers and the mood of man is characteristic of Wordsworth in a most typical poem ("I wandered lonely as a cloud"), where in twenty-four faultless lines of the most subtly emotionalising power, the poet seems at one stroke to enlarge the bounds of fancy and of fine enjoyment. Another discovery Wordsworth made in Coleridge's company (though he might well enough have arrived at it through Cowper and Blake) was the pathetic and almost ultra-romantic value in poetry of

the simple story, *truthfully* told, of some elementary affection,

Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,
That has been and may be again.

The poets (before Cowper at any rate) had so long been trying to produce studied effects and complicated feelings. Wordsworth, by a much truer poetic instinct, tried to concentrate everything upon evoking primal emotion in regard to nature as also in regard to the simple annals of the poor.¹

Plainly interpreted and disengaged of whatever is temporary or controversial, Wordsworth's poetic theory (misinterpreted even by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria*²), though it contains only a portion of the truth, is incontestably true as far as it goes; it was specially applicable to the interpretation of the great vault of heaven and the affections and sorrows of a primitive folk with which the poetry of Wordsworth was specially concerned; it was a doctrine pre-eminently salutary in regard to the state of English poetry at the time it was uttered; and it represented a view indispensably complementary to the cult of beauty and antiquity and poetical study of which Wordsworth's greatest poetic contemporary was to be so principal an exponent.

The limitations of the theory are exactly those which we should have anticipated from

¹ But great as Wordsworth is as the seer and interpreter of Wild Nature and her children (whose short creed and doxology may be read in *Tintern Abbey* and *Lines written in Early Spring*), he is greater perhaps as the emancipator of poetic expression from the stereotyped readings which Pope and Young and Akenside had manufactured from the materials amassed by Milton and Dryden and Waller. Poetry, Wordsworth maintained in his notable preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800, should not be constructed out of words peculiar to itself (poetic diction); nor should words appear in poetry that would surprise one in the best prose dealing with kindred imaginative subjects. A reasonable enough corollary of this view was that in dealing with village topics, it would be well to use a selection of the words actually used by villagers. Defending himself from attacks on *Goody Blake* and *The Idiot Boy*, from critics who could see only the comic side of a simple story, told in unconventionally simple language without humorous intention (such as Cowper would have lent it), Wordsworth protested with some pardonable exaggeration that the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, are less under restraint, and speak in a plainer language among peasants than elsewhere. Attacked for his prosaisms, he carried the war into the opposite camp and assailed their poeticisms and poetic dictions with an unwonted vivacity. Subsequently he proceeds to constructive ideas and defines poetry as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling which receives an external impress from the poet in the form of emotion recollected in tranquillity; poetry, in other words, must be the expression in the direct language, suggestive of the original emotion, of actual and spontaneous feeling; it must *not* be the expression in conventionally appropriate language of what the poet might be supposed to feel in the presence of striking objects carefully selected for the purpose of rhetorical display in metre.

² In discussing Wordsworth's poetical theories Coleridge, who was rather piqued at Wordsworth's suggesting to Cottle in regard to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* that *The Ancient Mariner* should be excluded and a "few little things" of his own put in, in its place, certainly took his friend rather too much *au pied de la lettre*. But his enumeration of Wordsworth's characteristic excellences remains a *locus classicus* in English criticism. He enumerates (1) appropriateness of words and meaning; (2) weight and sanity of thought and sentiment; (3) *curiosa felicitas* of diction (it is remarkable that there are more current expressions from Wordsworth in common use than from almost any poet except Shakespeare and Pope); (4) truth to nature in images and descriptions; (5) meditative pathos (deep and subtle thought linked with sensibility); (6) imagination.

the limitations of Wordsworth's poetic endowment. He was strikingly deficient both in dramatic power and in humour. Such pleasantries or frolic as he occasionally feels constrained to indulge in is of a singularly frost-bitten kind; his gambols are of the grotesque order that a Cato the censor might have been suspected of perpetrating. A recluse by early predilection and habit, Wordsworth's social talents were not of a high order and his critical power was very restricted outside the technical side of poetry, in which he was a complete master. The first essential of the poetic art, simplicity, he attained in the highest degree known, but in the second and even more essential quality of energy he was not so conspicuous, and he very rarely strikes the intense note of passion, exaltation, or stern indignation. There are, however, occasional exceptions to all these limitations. Uninspiring, again, and repetitive as much of his later verse is (for to him all his thoughts were valuable and could not be repeated in too many different forms), it is always intensely interesting from a technical point of view, and it is a complete mistake to suppose that when all the dross has been removed by the most exacting process of washing, sifting, and dredging, the pure ore that remains is scanty in amount. The amount of his work that the world will not willingly let die is surpassed certainly among English poets by Shakespeare alone, doubtfully approached only by Milton and Tennyson.

Wordsworth's ideas on poetics are often of

very high value; yet at times he talked prosaically enough about poetry, and there is something unpardonably prosaic to the outward view about his life and habit of meditative self-absorption, and almost superstitious egotism. This was the price that he paid for his visions. Wordsworth has only two rivals who poetised to anything like an equivalent extent over a long life—Milton and Tennyson; and Wordsworth at his best was certainly not the least of the three. He best of all understood that material of life is also material for poetry, and that, given the power of conversion, the poetic imagination can poeticise everything.

The charities that soothe and heal and bless
Are scattered at the feet of man—like flowers.

But he never seemed able to test and ascertain whether the process of transmutation was actually taking place; with the result that much of his poetry is half- or quarter-baked, and is poetry only in form—not in substance. Felicity with vowels and consonants goes far to the making of a poet, as Wordsworth well knew; but he kept this knowledge well under control, in the background. The best art, he maintained, was generated by the kindling flush of moral conceptions "felt in the blood and felt along the heart." This was the cardinal and formative influence of his life. We may express it thus: that unless he had written the second half of *Tintern Abbey*, he would never have had the inspiration to write the first.

CHAPTER II

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

“One day on my way to the City I met Coleridge brimful of some new ideas, and in spite of my assuring him that time was precious, he drew me within the door of an unoccupied garden by the roadside, and there, sheltered from observation by a hedge of evergreens, he took me by the button of my coat, and closing his eyes commenced an eloquent discourse, waving his right hand gently, as the musical words flowed in an unbroken stream from his lips. I listened entranced, but the striking of a church-clock recalled me to a sense of duty. I saw it was of no use to attempt to break away, so taking advantage of his absorption in his subject, I, with my penknife, quietly severed the button from my coat and decamped. Five hours afterwards, in passing the same garden, on my way home, I heard Coleridge’s voice, and on looking in, there he was, with closed eyes—the button in his fingers—and his right hand gracefully waving, just as when I left him. He had never missed me! The story is, of course, untrue, but as a commentary on Coleridge’s later conversational manner it could hardly be better.”—LAMB’S *Tale of Coleridge*.

Pantisocracy—Life with Wordsworth—Influence on contemporaries—Endless procrastination—*Christabel*—*Letters* and *Table Talk*.

THE youngest son of an absent-minded pedagogue, vicar of Ottery St. Mary, and his practical wife, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at the Vicarage, Ottery, on October 21st, 1772. His intellectual precocity was almost without parallel. Before he was eight he was already a “character,” a despiser of boys’ games and a dreamer of dreams. At the grammar school of Ottery in 1778-80 he was already regarded as a prodigy. But he was soon desupernaturalised at Christ’s Hospital, where he went on his father’s death in 1781, and was promptly submitted to the draconic regimen of Bowyer, “grim idol whose altars reeked with children’s blood.” In 1788 he became a Grecian, and in 1789 the appearance of Bowles’s *Sonnets* stirred his poetical ambition to its depths. His ability won him prizes and scholarships ere he went up to Jesus College, Cambridge, where his room rapidly became a centre of talk and declamation of extraordinary quality from this plump-cheeked, full-lipped boy of nineteen. Unprosperous in love and troubled by debts in his second year at college, Coleridge went to London and enlisted in a dragoon regiment. His docility and amiability were approved by his superiors, and his book-learning astonished the troopers even more than that of Steele had done before him; but he proved unequal to the task of rubbing

down his horse. On April 10th, 1794, after four months’ dragooning, he was received back with a reprimand at Cambridge. In the following June he went to Oxford, and made the acquaintance of that enthusiastic revolutionary, Robert Southey, then in residence at Balliol. From his intimacy with Southey there sprang important influences affecting his later life: first, his engagement to Sara Fricker, the daughter of a decayed Bristol merchant, whose sisters, Edith and Mary, were subsequently married to Southey and Robert Lovell. No other means of subsistence offering itself in the immediate future, the brothers-in-law to be formed the conception of a communistic settlement on the banks of the Susquehanna. Funds were lacking to the enterprise, and even if they had been forthcoming it is doubtful if Coleridge’s ardour for emigration would have outlived the enthusiasms of earlier days, when he had fancied himself first a surgeon, then a shoemaker, and quite recently a trooper. On quitting Cambridge without a degree in 1794, he found his way to London, renewed his friendship with Lamb, and exhibited that wonderful faculty for talking at large which spellbound so many hearers and remained a master passion to the very end of his life. To the obligations which he had incurred in the sublunary world, especially with regard to his engagement with



After the Painting by Allston.

S. T. Coleridge

Sara Fricker, he had to be dragged back by Southey. At Bristol, where the Pantisocrats now foregathered, Coleridge met bookseller Cottle, who offered to pay, upon what must be regarded as a generous scale, for any poetry he would write. On the strength of this he married, and thought out a careful scheme to support himself and his wife without any servant in a cottage upon the joint proceeds of gardening and poetry.

Attacks on Pitt in the advanced opposition Press, and occasional appearances as a lecturer or as a preacher in some Unitarian pulpit from which advanced views were acceptable, might help to furnish forth a few guineas. But before the end of 1795 he matured some more ambitious journalistic plans. In January, 1796, he started on a tour to the north (described with great humour in the *Biographia Literaria*) to engage subscribers for a new venture. He visited Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, and other towns, and came back with a list of nearly a thousand names. A prospectus was issued of *The Watchman*, price fourpence, which was to appear on March 1st, and on every eighth day (in order to avoid the tax payable on weekly newspapers), and to contain original matter, reviews, and full reports of parliamentary speeches. Cottle procured many subscribers at Bristol, and provided for part of the expenditure. The first number, as Coleridge tells us, was behind its time; the second (on "fast days") lost five hundred subscribers by "a censurable application of a text from Isaiah for its motto" (the motto was, "My bowels shall sound like a harp," Isa. xvi. 11); the two next disgusted the Jacobins and republicans, and the work dropped at the tenth number, with a frank statement of the "short and satisfactory reason" that it did "not pay its expenses." The failure of *The Watchman* in May, 1796, found Coleridge practically penniless. In the same year appeared the early poems called *Religious Musings*. No great results followed, but the poems must have served as credentials when Coleridge presented himself to the author of *Descriptive Sketches* and his "exquisite sister" at Racedown in Dorset in June, 1797.

Dorothy Wordsworth's fascinated appreciation of Coleridge's inspired talk cemented a friendship of the most uncommon order between the two poets. Both were at a critical period of development, and both were to receive the dip in Castalie from this timely association, brought about at a moment when Coleridge, his face glowing, his mind tingling in the first raptures of the ultra-human vitality induced by reaction after his first copious draughts of laudanum, poured out his spirit in monologue of an almost ecstatic order. Extraordinary as Coleridge was in the domain of spoken rhapsody, there was nothing whatever in his *Poems* of 1796 that could afford the least hint that his hand was already on the latch of the "magic casements."

The stars in their courses smiled upon English poetry when in August, 1797, rather than lose the inspiration of frequent communion with Coleridge, the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, two coombes and but three miles distant from Coleridge's agricultural cottage at Nether Stowey. For thirteen ever-to-be-remembered months three persons with one soul dwelt together in that beautiful corner of Somerset. Coleridge's spontaneous reflection in verse had proved humdrum enough. The new-born desire to achieve some tribute worthy to lay before a friend whose poetic stature he rightly estimated as gigantic, to express his new perception of the beauty and mystery of the world which Dorothy Wordsworth had helped so much to stimulate, and to irradiate with his imagination some of those grotesque subtleties of a strong fancy which had come to him from the perusal of rare and half-forgotten books¹—these desires were intensified at this juncture to the exceptional point with him of being translated into effective action.

In November, 1797, was projected the joint volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in which Coleridge and Wordsworth were to supplement each other, one illustrating the home truths of the supernatural, the other the supernatural beauty of incidents the most homely and familiar.

In this year, it is no exaggeration to say, was written practically everything that remains

¹ "He had sounded without guiding-charts the secret deeps of Proclus and Plotinus; he had laid down buoys on the twilight or moonlight ocean of Jacob Boehmen; he had cruised over the broad Atlantic of Kant and Schelling, of Fichte and Oken." A circumnavigator on the pathless waters of scholasticism and metaphysics, ancient balladry, neo-Platonism, and seventeenth-century travel, we know that in quaint old quartos he disinterred some of the weird superstitions and musical collocations (Shelvocke, Purchas, Burger, etc.), which he transmuted into the purest poetic ore.

as a measure of Coleridge's finer poetic gifts. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in which the archaic tone, the energetic phrasing, the repetitions and interrogations of the ancient ballad form are applied with such subtle artistry to a legend of the supernatural, which, having once stealthily taken hold of the imagination, refuses ever to quit it; *Christabel*, a fragment of an even more unapproachable mystery and indefinable artistic and metrical perfection and beauty; *Kubla Khan*, the supreme example of a kissing melody of the never-never land that borders between waking and sleeping moments, the avowed product as the others are unavowed of a state more or less immediately induced by subjection to opium before the subjection has gone too far and become a degrading slavery—these and a few fragmentary offshoots, such as *The Dark Ladye* and *Where is the Grave of Sir Arthur O'Kellyn?* are all that can be claimed for what is indubitably of the highest quality in poetry. The unrepeatable effort was due to an irrecoverable combination—the moral influence contributing to which was doubtless supplied by Wordsworth. The presence of the steady resolute will of the dalesman, as De Quincey remarks, seems for the time to have constrained his imagination from aimless wandering, and the lofty unwavering self-confidence of his friend inspired him with a similar energy. Away from Wordsworth after that year he lost himself in visions of work to be done that always remained to be done. Coleridge had every poetic gift but one—the will for sustained and concentrated effort. But the debt, it is needless perhaps to say, was by no means wholly on one side. To the extraordinary facility of Coleridge's dialectical apparatus both Lamb and Wordsworth owed the impregnation of ideas which, but for his impetuosity, would have remained dormant and unproductive. Not a few of Lamb's Shakespearean comments bear the impress of this distinguished origin, which is traced with minuteness and precision by De Quincey in the case of Wordsworth, both in the outline and detail of the famous Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*:

"Wordsworth was not a reader of philosophy, and he professed to detest mental analysis; yet the analysis of the creative faculty in the Preface is at once profound and clear. Coleridge, on the other hand, had a passion for philosophy; his quick and subtle

intellect revelled in its intricacies; it was his delight before poetry even when he was a schoolboy, and when he was an old man he could hardly be brought to converse on any other subject. Only the year before he sought the acquaintance of Wordsworth, the first son born to him—the ill-starred Hartley Coleridge—had been named after the English philosopher whose technical language is used throughout Wordsworth's Preface, not without the awkwardness and crabbedness that comes from want of familiarity. Coleridge was saturated with Hartley's psychology when he and Wordsworth first met; and when he was full of a subject his eloquence about it was unmatchedly rich and full. A new Plato would find admirable subjects for imaginary dialogues in these conversations between Coleridge and Wordsworth when they met almost daily for a whole year. Only Plato himself could hardly have done justice to the abundance and eloquence, the wide discursiveness of Coleridge's talk."

With Coleridge now at the very summit of his early promise and potentiality, a youth of twenty-five, making little money, but attracting friends of power and influence, and with an apparently illimitable future before him, it is interesting to pause a moment—the reality to come is so squalid and unmeaning in comparison with this superb endowment of promise—for a piece of self-portraiture which in its negation of reticence is evidently Coleridge himself and all over. "My face, unless when animated by immediate eloquence, expresses great sloth, and great—indeed, almost idiotic—good nature. 'Tis a mere carcase of a face—fat, flabby, and expressive chiefly of inexpression. . . . As to my shape, 'tis a good shape enough if measured, but my gait is awkward, and the walk of the whole man indicates indolence capable of energies. I am and ever have been a great reader, and have read almost everything—a library cormorant. I am deep in all out-of-the-way books, whether of the monkish times or of the puritanical era. I compose very little, and I absolutely hate composition, and such is my dislike that even a sense of duty is sometimes too weak to overpower it. I cannot breathe through my nose, so my mouth, with sensual, thick lips, is almost always open."

With this we have to compare the impression produced upon Hazlitt, not yet soured

and savage, when Coleridge appeared before his amazed view at Shrewsbury in January, 1798. He still clung to an idea that he might occupy a great pulpit among the Unitarians (whose views he subsequently denounced so insistently to Emerson); and the Unitarians, for their part, were more than ready to open their pulpits to a preacher whose eloquence promised to rival even the most splendid traditions of the refined age of Leighton and Jeremy Taylor. "His complexion," says Hazlitt in a passage which has few equals in the whole course of his prose, "was at that time clear and bright. His forehead was broad and high, light as if built of ivory, with large projecting eyebrows, and his eyes rolling beneath them like a sea with darkened lustre. 'A certain tender bloom his face o'erspread'—a purple tinge as we see it in the pale, thoughtful complexions of the Spanish portrait-painters, Murillo and Velasquez. His mouth was gross, voluptuous, open, eloquent; his chin good-humoured and round; but his nose, the rudder of the face, the index of the will, was small, feeble, nothing:—like what he has done. . . ." "When I got there, the organ was playing the 100th Psalm, and, when it was done, Mr. Coleridge rose and gave out his text, 'And He went up into the mountain to pray, *Himself, alone.*' As he gave out this text, his voice 'rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,' and when he came to the two last words, which he pronounced loud, deep, and distinct, it seemed to me, who was then young, as if the sounds had echoed from the bottom of the human heart, and as if that prayer might have floated in solemn silence through the universe. The preacher then launched into his subject like an eagle dallying with the wind."

The Unitarian firmament, it seems superfluous to point out, was too cramped for this brilliant Meteor, and a new means of mollifying the twin giants Bread and Cheese was opened out by the oracle's eloquence in January, 1798, when the brothers Thomas and Josiah Wedgwood expressed themselves honoured by Coleridge's acceptance of an annuity of £150 for life, "no condition whatsoever being an-

nexed to it." Coleridge determined to accept, we learn from Hazlitt, in the act of tying a bootlace. Rumour had reached him of a great light shining in Germany, and it became imperative, both from the intellectual and moral point of view, as he convinced Poole (to whose charge wife and child were entrusted) and all his friends, that he should light his torch from the Kantian philosophy wherewith to regenerate his erring countrymen. This was to be the *magnum opus* which his friends were never tired of imploring him to undertake. After the too brief period of brotherhood with Wordsworth and his sister at Nether Stowey, Coleridge's wander-years in Germany were probably among the happiest of his life. His curiosity roved with eager absorbing flight from subject to subject. He acquired a good command of the language, though his pronunciation remained puzzling, and an insight into German life, without which his finely executed translation of *Wallenstein* (now, it must be avowed, scarcely ever read) would have been impossible. He suffered much from home-sickness and longing to see his wife and child; but this was preferable perhaps to the symptoms of indifference which were soon to follow their reunion. This took place in the autumn of 1799.¹

In June, 1800, he moved with his family to the Lakes and settled at Greta Hall, hoping to renew in the enchantment of new scenery and a renewal of his Stowey intimacy with the Wordsworths that wonderful poetical estro and exhilaration of 1798. But practically nothing was done either in the way of poetic or remunerative composition. From month to month the completion of *Christabel* was regularly promised, and visionary books literally by scores, "completed save for transcription," appear in his letters and disappear into the limbo of self-delusion. He did nothing except ramble about in the neighbourhood of Dove Cottage, drifting farther and farther from his wife, whose faith in his ability to afford her any kind of support, moral or fiscal, was gradually ebbing. His lamentations about his health, promises, protestations, and explanations are increasingly pitiful. In 1804, after some pain-

¹ After visits to Stowey and Keswick, Coleridge now made his one determined start in journalism under Daniel Stuart on *The Morning Post* in the spring of 1800. To this paper, which was anti-ministerial, yet at the same time anti-Jacobin, and so coincided for the moment with his own particular 'doxy, he contributed some vigorous articles and the notorious lines called *Devil's Thoughts*; but advance payments and accumulating arrears soon made his position untenable.

ful breakdowns, he managed by the aid of loans from friends to leave the Wedgwood annuity to his wife and to ramble off to Malta, where the governor was sufficiently impressed by his powers to offer him a secretarial appointment, which he held for about a year. He returned home in August, 1806, with a melancholy sense of promises broken, and will paralysed. "An archangel somewhat damaged" was Lamb's succinct report on his appearance. He still drinks goblet after goblet (of laudanum!), afraid to ask after old friends, "ill, penniless, and worse than homeless." His poetic inspiration seemed to have breathed its last in his *Ode to Dejection*. His letters meanwhile get more and more Micawberish; it is always "I am on the eve of sending to press in two octavo volumes," those visionary tomes which never were to see the light. The Wedgwoods were now so disgusted at the use made of their annuity and the gradual relegation of parental duties to his brother-in-law, the over-burdened Southey, that half of the "unconditional" annuity is withdrawn. A fortunate asset at this conjuncture was the wonderful eloquence, the equivalent of Mr. Micawber's epistolary genius, which was "never to desert" him. It threw as complete a spell over De Quincey as it had formerly done over Hazlitt, and De Quincey was now in a position to make the poet an indefinite loan of £300, which disappeared as if by magic under the pressure of immediate claims.

A fresh attempt at an independent paper, *The Friend*, failed even more grotesquely than *The Watchman* had done, for its arrangements were, if possible, more laughably absurd. Coleridge now drifts back to London, and makes efforts, pathetic in their inconsecutiveness and impotence, to keep his head above water. The same shambling habits of procrastination and irregularity mar all his best efforts, even those fine essays on Shakespeare and Milton, which he repeated several times in London and Bristol, though seldom in the exact order or at the exact times indicated in his programmes and prospectuses. His audiences were small, but included some of the best

intellects of the day. He has just a gleam of success from the production of his old tragedy, *Remorse*, written in more vigorous days.

But some undertow seems dragging him back, so that he can never get his feet safely planted on dry land. He has almost passed out of the knowledge of the early stratum of friends when in 1817 a last despairing effort to escape from the thralldom of the laudanum (which he drank at the rate of a pint, or even more upon occasion, during the twenty-four hours) threw him up in a haven of comparative security at the Gillmans' house in Highgate. *The Ancient Mariner*, which the press had genially welcomed as "the most ludicrous story of cock and bull it has yet been our destiny to encounter," a few newspaper articles and courses of lectures constituted at this time the whole achievement of the man regarded by Lamb, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and De Quincey as the nonpareil of that prolific epoch. The recipient for so many years of irregular loans and of help to perform his most sacred domestic duties, it was in the fitness of things that this parasitic plant should find shelter at last under the eaves of some suburban gable. Stung by the accusation that it was he who had depraved Coleridge by his example, De Quincey retorted in later years by asserting that Gillman's patient, far from discarding opium for ever, had inveigled his adviser and host into his own pernicious habits. This was evidently not the case. A complete recovery was out of the question; but the poet was sufficiently emancipated from his enslavement for some literary salvage at least to be assured from the wreck of ancient hopes. When he first took up his abode with the Gillmans the proof-sheets of *Christabel* formed part of his luggage. With the addition of a second part, far inferior to the original, it was published in 1816, and, although denounced (like all Coleridge's work) by the "heavy" critical organs, it was welcomed by multitudes of those who had seen it or heard of its existence in manuscript, and had hailed it as the day-star of modern poetry. Its pre-natal influence had, in fact, been far from inconsiderable.¹

¹ During the peaceful yet comparatively busy years that followed also appeared the *Biographia Literaria*, a marvellous patchwork of apologetic autobiography, German metaphysics, critical disquisition (mainly upon the Poetics of Wordsworth), and warmed-up journalism; and eight years later the *Aids to Reflection*, a serious but by no means very original, coherent, or perspicuous attempt to find a basis in philosophy for the transition stage of liberalism in religion which was passing over the English Church. Coleridge's eloquence always followed the line of least resistance, and here he found the means for its exercise least obnoxious to the dominant influences of his later life. His last course of lectures was given during his sojourn at Highgate in 1818. Here, too, was formed that Thursday evening circle and those morning classes which exercised so much influence

His talk, it seems almost unnecessary to interpolate, was as fluent and as transcendental as ever. His sloth can be paralleled in Thomson, his inconsecutiveness by Ruskin. It is in the copiousness of many-coloured utterance that he is perhaps unique. Rogers tells of visiting him in company with Wordsworth, when he spoke uninterruptedly for two hours, Wordsworth listening with profound attention, and every now and then nodding his head as if in assent. "On quitting his rooms I said to Wordsworth, 'Well, for my part, I could not make head or tail of Coleridge's oration; pray, did you understand it?' 'Not one syllable of it,' was Wordsworth's reply." Most of Coleridge's friends were destined to be reconciled to him at one period or another. Among the staunchest of them was Tom Poole, who visited him a few months before his death. He had been at Highgate for now fully seventeen years, and had been practically an "old man" all the time. He died there in the tranquillity of spirit to which he had so gradually and painfully attained, on July 25th, 1834.

Coleridge always retained the sensitiveness of his self-respect; there was nothing sordid or mean in the baser sense about his abandonment of responsibility, and so he was able to the last to retain the devotion of some of the best men of his time. That of the Lambs was unflin-

ing, that of the Wordsworths strong and clear. De Quincey and Tom Poole and many more bespeak friendship never wholly wrecked, and a sense of shame which, although it may at times have been attenuated, was never wholly atrophied. After the small string of pearls of price written in 1797-8, the careless rapture of which period he never recovered, we are inclined to value Coleridge's *Letters* and *Table Talk* more even than his critical work—that to a large extent reflects the gradually evolved Shakespearean and æsthetic theories of Lessing and Kant and Schlegel and Schelling, with some at least of their characteristic faults and extravagances—but the *Letters* and journalistic fragments represent more nearly to us the man himself engaged in the congenial labour of monologising "from mount to mount in Cloudland." They represent, moreover, the wonderful richness of almost miraculous promise which threw such a spell over all the associates of Coleridge's marvellous youth. The fulfilment was marred, it is true; but the larger and more Boswellian the scale on which we can survey a life so strangely compounded of marvellous genius and pitiful irresolution, the more it is certain we shall find to forgive, the more inclined shall we be to regard that life less with indignation and censure than with wonder and compassion.

BRILLIANT, irresponsible, and culpably weak as Coleridge was, he was the darling of the best minds of his age, such as those of Charles Lamb and Robert Southey. Southey was, in a sense, his complement; his function, among others, was to provide a home for Coleridge's wife and children. His life was a prosaic appendix, as it were, to the brilliant and dithyrambic career of his brother-in-law. Born in Bristol (fellow native with the "wondrous boy" whose works one day he piously edited), the son of a poor linen-draper, Southey's early education at Westminster and afterwards at Balliol was provided by a parson uncle and a very worldly, inordinately genteel aunt. He proved one of those coy unattached students and poets for whom academic embraces have no charm. Precocious he was, however, and set himself down at nineteen to write an epic, in ten books, on *Joan of Arc*, one of the firstlings of the *insurgent* romantic spirit, published in 1796, just two years before the joint *Poems and Ballads*. Unfortunately for Robert Southey, who felt that his genius lay in such matters, an age was imminent, that of prose fiction, which regarded it as almost a first duty to *conspuer* the tale in verse. There was much froth and transient blue flame about the handsome young insurgent. From school he was expelled for touching upon one of the three sacred, and to that generation forbidden, things, republicanism, religion, and the rod. Now Southey denounced the rod, repudiated the Church as a profession, and wanted to start a communistic republic in America. To people the wilderness each young "pantisocrat" must take a wife, and consequently Southey and Coleridge, representing the united wisdom of Oxford and Cambridge undergraduatehood, and Robert Lovell, married three sisters (1795). In Southey's case, at any rate, all this was but the generous effervescence of youth. Marriage, a short apprenticeship to Portuguese travel, secretaryship and lawyering, and the enforced study of contemporary events sobered him rapidly. A few years more spent in preparing exotic epics—*Thalaba*, *Madoc*, *Kehama*—for posterity (an address which it is to be feared they will scarcely reach, despite the appreciation of Charles Fox, Scott, Stanley, and Newman), and then in 1803 Southey settled down at Greta Hall, Keswick, in order to be near Coleridge

upon a rising group of orthodox thinkers. Here, too, were garnered the materials for the *Table Talk* and the printed *Essays* on Shakespeare, the Dramatists, and Milton, which have contributed so greatly to Coleridge's critical fame.

and Wordsworth, and began to write for more immediate requirements. Southey wrote that his poetic side was to be fed and fostered at Greta Hall, yet he turned almost at once by sheer force of circumstance to the production of "Paternoster Row goods." He settled down to his harness by degrees, living well though from hand to mouth, and drudging incessantly at history (*Brazil and Peninsular War*, preliminary to the great History of Portugal which was to be his masterpiece), translations (*Amadis and The Cid*), travels (*Letters of Espriella*), hundred-pound reviews for *The Quarterly*, editions (Bunyan, Watts), Utopias (colloquies with Sir Thomas More and a vision of an ideal Anglican Church), compilations, everyday books, and table books (notably *The Doctor*, in the 127th chapter of which is embedded the delightful nursery classic of *The Three Bears*), stacks of Letters, and, above all, the three lasting biographies of poet, prophet, and fighting-man ("the finest-tempered fighting man England has ever produced"), the Lives of Cowper, Wesley, and Nelson. Southey's epics are admittedly superior to Glover's *Leonidas* or Wilkie's *Epigoniad*, yet our deprivation is not an unendurable one. The poems of romance in irregular verse are clean forgotten; the blank-verse *Roderick*, showing the loss of Spain to the Moors and the hero atoning by a life of self-sacrificing patriotism for the crimes of his youth, and so illustrating a purification by penitence and good deeds, is one degree better, and compares favourably with Scott's poem on a similar theme. Perhaps the best thing he got from his foreign and out-of-the-way reading was material for his ballads, most of them written between 1798 and 1803: *The Cross Roads* (1798), *The Battle of Blenheim* (1798), *The Old Woman of Berkeley* (1798), "You are old, Father William" (1799), *The Incheape Rock* (1802), "My days among the dead are past" (1818), and *Lodore* (1820). But better even than his plainsong or ballad is Southey's straight plain prose. We are apt to underrate the student and the metrical tale-teller in England. But we must recognise in Southey a pioneer prose narrator of the very first quality. Squeezed into intervals between poetising, mere literary carpentry, such as his Naval Biographies and *Quarterly Review* articles, Southey's *Letters* lack the brilliant entertainment of Byron and Lamb, or the deliberate finish of Cowper and FitzGerald. Yet as *mémoires pour servir* Southey's *Letters* are, perhaps, the most valuable of all, and they combine the *utile* and the *dulce* in what is, perhaps, the acme of flexibility, or, in other words, serviceability of style. In history again Southey undoubtedly lacks the highest qualities whether of archivism or picturesque emphasis. Nevertheless, the application of his ethical and stoical theories (derived from his favourite Epictetus) give to his historical pages a certain classical dignity of their own, which gains enormously by the steady and rhythmical fluency of his style. His *Peninsular War*, for instance, is the perfection of marching English, fluid, bright, and clear as crystal. Observe his account of the death of Sir John Moore, how evidently it inspired those immortal stanzas which found their way anonymously into the papers of 1817, and after being ascribed to Campbell and Byron, were eventually traced to the curate of Ballyclog (Charles Wolfe, 1791—1823). A life so blameless, so pure, so hardworking, and so bookish as Southey led at Greta was not, it must seem, to be led with impunity. Money troubles were succeeded, after 1813, when he became poet laureate and began to accumulate pensions, by more grievous afflictions. He lost his son and he lost his first wife, whilst his second marriage was followed almost immediately by a progressive softening of the brain. His surpassing love of books was almost the last faculty to leave him; and Southey, the good, the exemplary Southey, after a "not unhappy" life of almost superhuman toil, passed away, a pathetic husk, at Keswick on March 21st, 1843, and was buried in the churchyard of beautiful Crosthwaite.

In spite of his confidence in immortality for his work, Southey seems destined by Time to become little more than a footnote to the fame of Wordsworth and Coleridge. We could say as much with certainty but for the chance apparition of one unstudied essay which was destined to develop into something closely resembling a *chef-d'œuvre*. It sprang out of an article upon contemporary biographies of Nelson in the pages of *The Quarterly Review*. At John Murray's request Southey went on to do a Life as it should be done, partly out of the material he had criticised, receiving for his *avoidsupois* the recognised wages of shame—one hundred guineas. He had to do it rapidly, without multifarious reading, and without multiplied draughts, and, although the author had to "move among sea terms like a cat among crockery," his performance still has something of the sea; free from rhetoric, it is still essentially heroic; free from brag, it is still a noble expression of patriotic pride in England's national hero.

What a contrast between the provident, manly, hardworking, contented, and devoted Southey and the uneasy, hypochondriacal, flighty, irresolute, and superficial Campbell! Yet they commenced poets precociously young, almost in the same year, the not ill-looking varlet (as Byron called Southey) and the spruce, curly, blue-coated, handsome Tom Campbell, dressed, as Byron put it, in a birthday suit from Apollo. They both wrote hard against time for money, and both are best remembered as poets by a few vagrant ballads or songs, partaking somewhat of the nature of accidents. It is true, of course, that Southey has his prose fame, while Campbell attempted little beyond prose carpentry. Unless he has been grossly belied by his biographers, the life of Campbell is rapid beyond that of almost all our poets. The son of a reduced Virginia merchant of Glasgow, he was born in that city on July 27th, 1777. At school and college he was a prize boy; yet he could settle to no profession, and was not a little disgusted with himself for the instability which would condense into no form more solid than that of a cataract of boyish verse. Few can have developed so early a more complete mastery of the Popean couplet. Written mainly in 1798 in avowed emulation of Akenside and Rogers, Campbell's youthful *Pleasures of Hope* was published and publicly famous before the poet was twenty-two. If to have no more serious rivals in popularity than Hayley and Rogers be a fortunate circumstance for a poet, Campbell was *felix opportunitate*. With the poem as his sole prop Campbell now

started off for Germany, and his wander-years are responsible for his best verse—contained in a compass smaller even than Gray's.

His *Wounded Huzzar*, a ballad of tawdry sentiment in a swinging rhythm which at once caught the popular ear, was followed by very much better things, by four shining poems of battle and torrent, worthy to rank with any martial verse in the stirring language consecrated by Shakespeare, Drayton, Scott, Cowper, Macaulay, Wolfe, Byron and Tennyson, Kipling or Newbolt. Abroad during the first years of the last century he caught the fever of militarism. The *Mariners of England* (1801), *Hohenlinden* (1803), "Of Nelson and the North"—these and *Lord Ullin's Daughter* were the prizes of this "Salvator Rosa of the ballad." In these he has felt and expressed the sublimity of battle with an almost Hebraic sternness of imagination, in which the rhetorician that was in him seemed almost dismayed by the wonderful power his words engendered, as in the parallel instance of Edgar Allan Poe. Apart from these glorious stanzas, our "Tyrtæus" wrote nothing beyond the limit of Tom Moore at his best (in "How delicious is the winning" and "Our bugles sang truce" he beats Moore on his own ground), and just two or three lines that all the world knows, such as "Coming events cast their shadows before" or "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." His later poems, his good work as a founder of London University, his extravagant popularity as Lord Rector of Glasgow, and his dilettante editorship of *The New Monthly Magazine*, upon which he trained Cyrus Redding and S. C. Hall, and in the chair of which he was succeeded by Hook and Ainsworth, concern us but little. All we need of "procrastinating Tom" Campbell is contained in the anthologies. The fortunate possessors of libraries do not even know whether they possess a Campbell—and care less. His long poems dwell with those of Samuel Rogers. The once famous *Pleasures* of both please no longer, unless it is as a kind of refracted sunset from the bright, sunken orb of Pope.

Samuel Rogers (1763—1855), born at Stoke Newington in the heyday of the eighteenth century in the year of Johnson's transfiguration and the foundation of his glorious Club, was brought up under influences decidedly antagonistic to militant Toryism. Dr. Price, nay Priestley and Horne Tooke—these were the oracles of his youth, and advanced Liberal views were instilled into him from his earliest years. He became that anomaly in nature, a rich poet, a Parnassian banker, a Liberal in spirit, and a Tory in form. His poems, the Akensidean *Pleasures of Memory* (1793), and the metrical tale of *Jacqueline*, or the dilettante poem on *Italy*, which a romantic footboy of Byron's might have written, and which would inevitably have been dished but for the plates by Turner and Stothard, are almost negligible, if we omit one or two little pastels—the mantle of Shenstone—such as "Mine be a cot beside the hill," which is truly delightful and deserves its place in *The Golden Treasury*. "Charming," Sydney Smith found the lines, but obvious deviations from truth, and written in St. James's Place. His home there, where he exercised in turn the functions of Horace and Mæcenas, was Rogers's real glory, and the chronicles of his breakfasts and his jokes—are they not written for all the world to read in the three delightful volumes of *Sam Rogers and his Contemporaries*, by P. W. Clayden.

Here the wits who dated back either in time or taste to the age of Johnson met, the sparks of the Regency, meteors from Holland House such as Henry Luttrell, with his soup and patty look and a fresh witticism ever quivering on his lips, or lacustrine poets—Coleridge, Lamb, their receiver-general, Crabbe Robinson, or it might be even "Wordy" himself. The idolised poet of *The Edinburgh* and *Quarterly*, Rogers lived until he looked a death's-head, and it was believed that the record of his birth had been consumed in the Great Fire of London. His tongue could be cruel, but you had only to say Tom Campbell to borrow £500 of him, and he would never say a word against you until you repaid it. In 1850 he was offered the laureateship, next year he abandoned his immortal breakfast parties; in 1855 he passed peacefully away at the age of ninety-two. His *Table-Talk* survives his poems, and promises to become a classic of its kind. (An attempt to combine the two versions given to the world respectively by Alex. Dyce and Wm. Sharpe in 1856 and 1859 was made by G. H. Powell in 1903.)

From the stale rhythm of such clever versifiers as Rogers and Campbell, English literature was saved by the original genius of Wordsworth and Coleridge, with whom in one sense or another Robert Southey will ever be associated. Even their enthusiasm might not have been able to conquer the *vis inertiae* of the eighteenth century but for the impression already made by the Transition Poets such as Gray, Collins, Beattie, and the school of the Wartons (Blake and Burns were too meteoric to have much immediate influence), and, secondly, for the great tidal current created by Rousseau and the French Revolution, which first carried them clear of the great obstruction of oligarchical exclusiveness and decorum, and then hurled them by a process of repulsion upon the sunlit pathway of Romance.

CHAPTER III

GREAT CRITICS

"Damn the Age! I'll write for antiquity."

"With him the natural passions had room to play; and his wit, flashing out of his melancholy, was as the summer lightning playing innocuously round the very cloud which gave it birth. And thus it is the overburdened spirit relieves itself: a pun may discharge a whole load of sorrow; the sharp point of a quibble or a joke may let out the long-gathered waters of bitterness. We want no Hamlets to teach us this. We need no Sternes to tell us how thoughts and imaginings, pensive and jocose, alternate and play across each other and intermingle in the mind. This was Lamb's wit—it kept apart by itself. It did not sharpen the arrows of satire, it did not grin with a provoking malice, it did not thirst for reward, it did not cater to vanity, it did not live on adulation. It was his own quiet possession and delight. It had no fellowship with the Footes, the Sheridans, the Colmans of the day. It rose higher, as it sprang from a greater depth than theirs; but it held acquaintance with—it paid a becoming deference to—the wits and wise men of old. It shook Master Shallow by the hand; it pulled off its cap in the presence of Sir Thomas Browne; helped old Fuller to his great armchair; eat a pippin and carraways with Mr. Justice Shallow in his garden; walked arm in arm between Bunyan and Bishop Patrick; loved the old playwrights dearly and the name of Bankside; would converse with Jewell and Fox and the primitive Quakers; read Homer in Chapman and not in Pope; would be seen bending gracefully on knee to the Duchess of Newcastle like a page in one of Vandyck's pictures; and everywhere it smacked rarely of antiquity; and had an equal command over smiles and tears. Being thus, it will endure."—LE GRICE, in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1838.

Charles Lamb—Hazlitt and *The London Group*—Thomas De Quincey.

I

THROUGHOUT the eighteenth century there had been a fairly strong undercurrent of romantic feeling, but the strength of it was not perceived until in 1798 Wordsworth and Coleridge demonstrated that the old anchorage to the shoal of Pope and Dryden was no longer holding, and that new bearings would have to be made out and new sights taken in the firmament of poetry. A parallel revolution was in the course of progress in regard to literary taste generally. A continuity of growth in English poetry was detected and traced by such scholars as Gray and Warton. But it was left for a new school of critics, who were wits and sentimentalists as well as virtuosi, to demonstrate to all men that there was good English prose before Addison, and that the forgotten poetic drama and quaint tapestried prose of the seventeenth century were living possessions, which no good Englishman who professed to a tincture of letters could possibly afford to neglect. The fragrance of the fine literature of the past was first exhaled from the parlour of a poor Cockney book-lover—too

poor to possess a regular library—but unrivalled perhaps among all literary antiquarians in his power of communicating to others by some subtle telepathy of his own his beatific vision of old forgotten authors. The laboratory of the critical alchemists of the dawn of the nineteenth century has been described to us in detail and vividly portrayed by a large number of careful observers and narrators. If only we had similar material for reconstructing an evening at the Mermaid that we have for picturing a Wednesday evening with Lamb or an ambrosial night with Coleridge at the Salutation and Cat, how much more interesting would this (and all other literary histories) become!

In the closing years of the eighteenth century, a small English family, in very humble circumstances, was occupying rooms at No. 7, Little Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. The circle was composed of an old man and his wife, their two children (a brother and a sister), and these children's aunt on the mother's side—a maiden lady already advanced in years.

There was another son, who held some responsible position in the South Sea House; but he, though a bachelor, lived apart. He was a person of rather peculiar disposition. The intercourse between him and his relatives was comparatively limited. The old man himself had formerly been clerk to one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, and had retired on a slender annuity. The son whom he had living with him under the same roof was, like his elder brother John, on the South Sea establishment. John, it appears, had had it in his power to place him there, and this was nearly (if not quite) the only obligation under which the family ever lay to John. The insignificant salary which the younger son derived from his labours at the South Sea House, reinforced by his father's trifling allowance, was for some years the sole support of the entire household. There was about £100 a year altogether; yet they lived, these five, in some fashion, and bore their lot patiently.

"It was a mere youth who formed their main-stay. He had been educated at Christ's Hospital, which he entered when he was seven, and quitted when he was between fourteen and fifteen. He had the happiness to form, during his continuance upon that noble foundation, a few life-friendships; but it was his special good fortune to form one which was indescribably precious. About two years subsequently to their removal from a previous residence in the Temple to Little Queen Street, the youth, to whom the family looked for their maintenance, managed to get sufficient influence exerted in his behalf to procure his transfer from the South Sea House to the service of the East India Company in Leadenhall Street. Personally, he lost whatever moral support and companionship his brother's presence under the same roof might have been to him, but the prospect became brighter for them all. Very slight benefit accrued at first, perhaps; but a few pounds a year formed a rather important consideration, in these days, in the eyes of the members of the small, obscure home in the neighbourhood of Holborn. They lived much to themselves, content if the means were at hand of supplying their day-to-day wants. The old people were gradually sinking into dotage. The daughter worked at her needle, and had an apprentice bound to her; but her earnings probably added little to their resources.

They saw no society, and friends were few. It must have been with no common sense of loneliness that the young clerk passed to and from the dreary building in Leadenhall Street, through the bustling thoroughfares—observing, but not observed. At one end of his daily journey there was a home, which was only home in name; at the other, there was drudgery only made sufferable by the feeling of how much depended on his labour—only sweetened by the load which rested on his individual shoulders, too young yet to be so over-weighted."

Such is Hazlitt's description of the humble little household, which did not even pretend to *gentility* (which the soul of Borrow so loathed), from which one of the most subtle and pervasive influences in the history of modern letters was to proceed—humbler in its origin, if possible, than the upper room almost destitute of chairs in which the Merovingian youth of 1830 rallied to form the cenacle which bore to victory Victor Hugo—the charioteer of French Romanticism. It was nevertheless amid such unpromising surroundings as these that were spent the early years of Charles Lamb, a man who explored the dark continent of English literature and described and classified the "specimens" which he rediscovered with a clearness and a delicacy and refinement of *taste* and *ripe literary culture* which a hundred years of further criticism and inquiry has only learned to emphasise.

He was born in Crown Office Row, Temple, on February 10th, 1775, his father being a confidential servant, a kind of liveried clerk, of Samuel Salt (one of Elia's "Old Benchers"). This same John Lamb (son of a shepherd on the wolds of Lincolnshire), a handy man of an incorrigible honesty, who made punch better than any man of his degree in England, never forgot that he was a servant—and his famous son seems to have cherished the memory with a positive affection. Like Dodsley, he combined a livery with a love of letters, composed some *Poetical Pieces on Various Occasions*, and declined into rather a querulous old age, to which his son Charles had to contribute a quota of compulsory cribbage. By his wife, Elizabeth Field, housekeeper at Gilston in Hertfordshire (seat of the Plumer-Wards, commemorated in the *Blakesmoor* and *My Relations*, in *Elia*), he had three children who survived infancy—John, Mary Anne (1764—1847, "Bridget Elia"), and

Charles. The facts of Charles's early career are scattered up and down his essays, the best of which (*Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago*, *My Relations*, *Mackery End*, *Blakesmoor*, *The Old and the New Schoolmaster*, *The Old Benchers*, and *The South Sea House*) are autobiographical; while the two which we consider the very best, if it be permissible to discriminate between such delicacies, the *Praise of Chimney Sweepers* and *A Dissertation upon Roast Pig*, both contain autobiographical notes. Obtaining a presentation through Salt, Lamb remained at the Bluecoat School from 1782 to 1789, and might have become a Grecian and followed his school-friend Coleridge to Cambridge, but to do this he would have had to prepare for Orders in the Church. After a temporary occupancy of a stool in a counting-house, Salt in 1791 got him a writership in the South Sea House, where his elder brother was already provided, and in April, 1792, Charles, now seventeen, got a move to the East India House.

The friendly Old Bencher (a link between Sterne, at whose funeral he had assisted, and Charles Lamb) died in this same year, and the Lambs moved from the Temple, and we hear no more of them till, in 1796, they are in Little Queen Street, Holborn (now merged in the new thoroughfare of Kingsway). Here, in September, while the family were preparing for dinner, Mary Lamb (who had been strange in manner for some days) seized a case-knife lying on the table; and in a menacing manner pursued a little girl, her sewing apprentice (she herself being at this time a "mantua-maker"), round the room. The mother, who was infirm, called to her loudly to desist, whereupon with loud shrieks she turned on her mother and stabbed her to death with the knife. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of lunacy. Rather than that she should be relegated for life to a public asylum, Charles undertook to be responsible for her safeguarding in future. But meanwhile the poor India House clerk himself was terribly alarmed lest the shock should lead to a deprivation of his own reason, which had already suffered a temporary eclipse in the winter of 1795-6, when he had to submit (as he writes to Coleridge) to be shut up in Hoxton Asylum for six weeks. He may have

had one or two relapses into this terrible inherited insanity; but, if so, they were very slight and transient ones. With his sister it was far otherwise; the relapses were increasingly frequent as time went on. Fortunately she had ample premonition as to when the fit was coming upon her, and when this happened her brother would take her under his arm to Hoxton Asylum. "It was very affecting to encounter the brother and sister walking together (weeping) on this painful errand, Mary herself, although sad, very conscious of the necessity of a temporary separation from her only friend. They used to carry a strait waistcoat with them."

Charles, Daddy, and an old maid-servant now made up their minds to live on £130 a year in order to save £50 for the independent support of Mary. They soon moved to Pentonville, with the further encumbrance of old "Aunt Hetty" (the old dame who brought him a bi-weekly basin of food to supplement the rude school fare), who died a few months later. For some time henceforward the richest store of biographical information is to be found in Lamb's letters to Coleridge, the inspired youth of Lamb's schooldays, whose acquaintance he had renewed in those memorable *noctes cœnæque* at the Salutation and Cat Tavern in Newgate Street during Coleridge's jaunt from Cambridge. A shy and moody youth, with an external appearance not exactly prepossessing, a stutter, and an unconventionality of phrasing that proved no allurement to casual acquaintances, Lamb was the slave of his desk from ten to four,¹ and the "healing influence of studious pursuits" was frequently an insufficient change and recreation from the day's routine. The result was a group of drinking companions who were, on the whole, unworthy of him. But the renewal of his old fellowship with and formation of a new affection for Coleridge proved a starting-point in a new life. Coleridge served as a bridge over a barrier which had seemed insurmountable between the literary ambitions he had secretly cherished and the humility of a poor, humbly born, and instinctively homely city clerk. Link by link, with the aid of Coleridge, whom he visited at Nether Stowey in that great seminal year 1797 (Wordsworth, Thelwall, Lloyd, Southey, Hazlitt,

¹ "The dry drudgery of the desk's dead wood (confusion to the firs of the forest that die into desks!)" enters his soul, he complains; prisoned from the sun six hours a day, he is surprised to find how pretty it shines Sundays. ["Called off to do the deposits on cotton-wool—Genius of British India, I come! I come!"]



Charles Lamb

and Manning, another schoolfellow, C. V. Le Grice, and "Jem" White, of the essay *On Chimney Sweepers*, whom he had aided with counsel and contributions to *The Falstaff Letters*), a literary circle, few links of which were ever damaged, was gradually built up. In men such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, Lamb could find sympathy both for his ignorance—"in science a whole encyclopædia behind the rest of the world"—and for his rare knowledge of seventeenth-century classics, Browne, Burton, Walton, Fuller, Cowley, or Jeremy Taylor, out of the rich soil of which reading a new flower—or rather, perhaps, a choice variety of a very old one—was soon to spring. A master of the purer and more poetic element in prose was in this way evolved from a generation of orators and moralists (it was the imaginative, not the reasoning, part of the mind that he sought to cultivate)—a master destined to communicate an impulse as profound in its way as that given by the lyrical balladists themselves. For many years to come Lamb's progress in an individual style of his own is to be traced only in his *Letters*. The quaint wit of these, as inveterate as the indelicate quips of Sterne (as where, for instance, he interpolates in a postscript, "By the way, may not the Ogles of Somersetshire be remote descendants of *King Lear*?" or writes to Manning in China, "How do you like the Mandarinesses? Are you on some little footing with any of them?"), is only less inimitable than the beauty of the expression.

Apart from these and a few poems of a restrainedly sentimental and quiet beauty, including *The Old Familiar Faces* and *When Maidens such as Hester Die*, inspired, or at least prompted, most of them, by one or two thwarted love affairs which cannot be supposed to have scathed their victim very severely (they appeared mainly in 1796 or 1797), he seems in these years to have regarded literature mainly as a milch-cow from which guineas in aid of housekeeping might be laboriously extracted. "I must do something in the literary way," he repeats, "or we shall get very poor." Too often those resolves came to no more than "an idle brag or two of an evening." In this spirit, though he had no gift or taste for narrative whatever—narrative, he said, teased him—and still less faculty for dramatic construction, he wrote a novel, and compiled a tragedy and a farce. The novel of prose romance, *The Tale*

of *Rosamund Gray* and *Old Blind Margaret* (1798), though it fascinated Shelley, must be pronounced a sentimental nullity. *John Woodvil*, though one of the best of those imitations of Jacobean drama which came in with Ireland and Tobin, and were prolonged by Knowles, Beddoes, Taylor, Darley, and Talfourd, is of no account in itself, but interesting as showing the extent to which Lamb had steeped himself in seventeenth-century diction. *Mr. H.*, given at Drury Lane in December, 1806, was damned irrevocably by the gods, and the author himself joined hysterically in the hissing, but it is a pretty good farce for all that. Mary Lamb had now been living for some years (the father had died in 1799) with her brother in the Temple. Her reputation as a lunatic caused some embarrassment to the mutually devoted pair, and they were still poor enough to miss severely the guineas anticipated from the benefit night of *Mr. H.* Charles had done a good deal of hack work (laboured jocosities) for the *Post*, but this had come to an end in 1803. "I grew sick, and Stuart unsatisfied. 'Ludisti satis, tempus abire est.' I must cut closer, that's all." At least he "regained health and spirits" by the transaction. Now, however, came some more fruitful commissions: *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807) and several children's books, written in conjunction with Mary; and a prose epitome of Chapman's *Odyssey*, called *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Mary did most of the *Tales* (the first commercial success of the family), and Charles groaned heavily over his share of six tragedies. To toothache and its relieving gumboil, he compared himself and his ally during the throes of composition. The *Ulysses* was done in a blither mood, and prepared the way for the *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare*. Specimens, he says apologetically, are becoming fashionable. They used to be called Beauties. Such a commission might help him to forget the rebuff of *Mr. H.* "So I go creeping on since I was lamed with that cursed fall from off the top of Drury Lane Theatre into the pit, something more than a year ago. However, I have been free of the house ever since, and the house was pretty free with me upon that occasion. Damn 'em, how they hissed! It was not a hiss neither, but a sort of frantic yell like a congregation of mad geese, with roaring sometimes like bears, mows and mops

like apes, sometimes snakes that hissed me into madness."

To return to the *Tales*, though his exact knowledge of the plots may sometimes appear defective, Lamb could not do this kind of thing badly; his Jacobean English combined its cadences admirably with the Shakespearean English—he was able to interweave. But it was task work all the same. It was different with the *Specimens* selected from his own "midnight darlings," the dramatists from Marlowe to Shirley. The notes to these almost infallible selections bespeak an appreciation which is almost equivalent to a new sense in our literary criticism. Something in the way of original suggestion is due to Coleridge, and some of the credit must be portioned out to Hazlitt; but, in the main, it was Lamb who was the true pioneer of this poetical renaissance. Two things may be noted: First, that Lamb judges the Fords, Websters, and Fletchers and Heywoods not as efficient playwrights, but as dramatic poets; secondly, that like most literary benefits of this order, his work has been qualified by some injudicious exaggeration, greatly emphasised and accentuated by the manner in which subsequent critics have stereotyped Lamb's top notes of praise without the necessary interpretative apparatus.

Three little stories or sketches were contributed by Charles Lamb to his sister's volume for children called *Mrs. Leicester's School* in 1807, the interest of which is mainly confined to the fact that they foreshadow, however faintly, *The Essays of Elia*. For the next twelve years or more, with the exception of private letters, and a few essays to Leigh Hunt's *Reflector*, Lamb wrote practically nothing. It was the happiest period of his life; the wind was tempered to the "shorn lambs"; they had the torture of transplantation from the Inner Temple to Bow Street, but by way of compensation were "morally sure of the earliest peas and 'sparagus," and were in sure possession of "indefensible indolence," while all the time Charles was automatically growing richer. And all the time his critical judgment was ripening against the timely fruitage of *Elia*. The marvellous, the unparalleled essays that go by this name were now to appear and to exhibit Lamb as the first critic of the age, as paramount indeed in criticism as Wordsworth or Byron in poetry. The opportunity for the emission of these *deliciæ litterarum* came about thus.

In January, 1820, Baldwin, Craddock & Joy, publishers, brought out a new monthly journal under an old name as *The London Magazine*, under the direction of a born journalist and editor, John Scott. Scott enlisted at once Allan Cunningham, B. W. Procter, C. A. Elton, (Dante) Cary, William Hazlitt, Horace Smith, De Quincey, T. G. Wainwright, and an old contributor of at least seven years' standing, Charles Lamb. Lamb already knew many members of the staff, and Hazlitt may have been the intermediary in arranging for Lamb's first essay to appear in August, 1820. The paper was *Recollections of the South Sea House*, where he had been a writer as a boy, and remembered an old Italian clerk of the name of Elia, dead some months previously, whose name he adopted as a pseudonym. Lamb was allowed a perfectly free hand in these essays, in which he was thus to display not only the literary fragrance of the forgotten literature of the seventeenth century, but all those qualities best calculated to adorn the English Essay, which he had been gradually assimilating for at least twenty years. The essays went on intermittently in the *Magazine* until 1825. In the meantime, Lamb had collected twenty-eight of them, and issued them in 1823 as *The Essays of Elia*; and it was not until 1833 that this volume, the circle of whose admirers was select, was followed by the supplementary *Last Essays of Elia*. Whether we consider the exquisite style, with its combination of sentimental allusiveness, self-pleasing quaintness, and ironic wit, the catholic and infallible literary sympathy with everything of really first-rate quality among English writers of the past, or the stimulating power which is so bracing that a single page of Charles Lamb inevitably has the effect of sharpening every faculty of literary appreciation, we cannot fail to recognise the apparition of *Elia* as an incident of no little magnitude in the evolution of English literature. In taking him as a literary guide, we have, of course, to allow for the personal equation—his jealous love of the literature of the past, which inclined him to take a mocking and depreciatory view of the literature of his own day. There was also a tendency in him to over-praise undeservedly forgotten authors—"oddities of authorship please me most"—but he was never purblind, as so many literary antiquaries are apt to be. Shakespeare and Milton always maintained their position as the great luminaries

in his literary firmament, sailing serenely among planets and asteroids, many of these rediscovered by Lamb himself. Homely in many of his domestic tastes, he liked his literature of the very best, and he said so without affectation or interested taint of any kind. When Coleridge once asked, "Charles, have you ever heard me preach?" he replied, "My dear fellow, I have never heard you do anything else." Now, Lamb himself never preached; he is never even instructive;¹ he is just one of those laughing philosophers who illustrate the truth that wit and wisdom at their best are combined in the person of one, from whose casual jests we learn more than from all the schoolmasters in the world. To read Lamb attentively is to bring into operation a set of faculties which are apt with many of us to get into a very lethargic state for want of employment; and when the reader closes that famous *Dissertation* of Lamb's which concludes with the words, so exquisite in that context—"but consider, he is a weakling—a flower"—his facial and more particularly his risory muscles are drawn up about the curves of the mouth into the most complicated of smiles, while the lips silently and automatically shape themselves in the formation of a word which the labial expert would have no difficulty in discerning to be—"perfect!" So it has come about that, like Cowper and Jane Austen, Elia is a household word among hundreds to whom literature is a luxury—a cistern of exquisitely strained and filtered thoughts and reflections about life and letters to which the thirsty can have recourse again and again for refreshment.

Lamb's character has to some extent been curiously distorted and obscured by the class of critics who are so fond of dwelling upon the gentleness of Shakespeare, the sanctity of Milton, and the holiness of Wordsworth.² It

has been the custom to represent him as a man of some small foibles redeemed by his sacrifice of self upon the altar of fraternal duty. Lamb, it is true, was as devoted to his sister as a man could well be; but the motive was less altruistic than the martyrologists would have us believe. Mary Lamb was far from being the Mrs. Brownrigg or the Sally Brass that her exploit with the carving-knife and the apprentice might lead the uninitiated reader to imagine. She was in reality during her lucid intervals one of the kindest-hearted, most sensible, and resourceful women that could well be found. She humoured and, under the surveillance of a certain ancient domestic, "Beckey," kept house for Charles, to the expenses of which she was able to contribute by means of her children's stories. Her external appearance and simple, old-fashioned manners were eccentric; but she was absolutely indispensable to the good-humour or well-being of her brother. She alone could supply his spirits with the intellectual complement that they needed; she alone could give him a good "setting to rights" when he was relapsing too seriously into melancholy, drink, or other of those "cursed ways of going on." There were occasional bickerings, no doubt, "as it should be between near relations"; but there was no exaggeration in Lamb's stating to Dorothy Wordsworth: "While she is dead to me [in the asylum on her periodical visit] I miss a prop. All my strength is gone, and I am like a fool bereft of her co-operation. I dare not think lest I should think wrong; so used am I to look up to her in the least and the biggest perplexity. . . . I can conceal nothing that I do from her. She is older and wiser and better than I. . . . She lives but for me."

The obligations as between brother and sister were thus by no means wholly upon one

¹ It is an amusing coincidence as illustrating the two extremes of essay writing, the imaginative and the instructive, that Macaulay's first notable essay, that on Milton for *The Edinburgh*, should have appeared in the same year that Lamb ceased to write for *The London*.

² When the verses describing Lamb as "gentle-hearted" were printed in the *Annual Anthology* in 1800, Lamb wrote to Coleridge: "For God's sake (I never was more serious), don't make me ridiculous any more by terming me gentle-hearted in print, or do it in better verses. It did well enough five [three] years ago when I came to see you, and was moral coxcomb enough at the time you wrote the lines to feed upon such epithets; but, besides that, the meaning of gentle is equivocal at best, and almost always means poor-spirited: the very quality of gentleness is abhorrent to such vile trumpeting. My *sentiment* is long since vanished. I hope my *virtues* have done *sucking*. I can scarce think but you meant it in joke. I hope you did, for I should be ashamed to think that you could think to gratify me by such praise, fit only to be a cordial to some green-sick sonneteer." He adds, in a letter a few days later: "In the next edition of the *Anthology* (which Phœbus avert and those nine other wandering maids also!) please to blot out gentle-hearted, and substitute drunken dog, ragged-head, seld-shaven, odd-eyed, stuttering, or any other epithet which truly and properly belongs to the gentleman in question. And for Charles read Tom, or Bob, or Richard for more delicacy."

side. In other respects it is quite true that, as far as the major morals are concerned, Lamb presents a noble figure—second only perhaps in the ranks of modern English writers to Dr. Johnson. He was a true friend, a sincere sympathiser with the poor and lonely, he was generous to an extreme, pious and dutiful in domestic matters, incapable, it would seem, of a mean action. "Hazlitt," says Mr. Birrell, in his *Life of that worthy*, "was not in want at the end. No friend of Charles Lamb's ever was." This is a splendid compliment; but is, it would appear, fully deserved.

When we come to the *virtutes minores* (about which Chesterfield was so insistent), we cannot be so certain. It is the property of a writer such as Lamb, who embodies the concentrated charm of centuries of skilled essay-writing—it may be seen, too, notably in the case of those who have most nearly approached him as letter-writers and essayists, Cowper, FitzGerald, and Robert Stevenson—to engender in his readers a strong personal liking, a feeling that we would have given anything to *know* them. But would we? It is rather dubious whether the best Lamb-lovers of to-day would experience ten minutes' ease in his company. A difficult man to know was Charles Lamb. He and Mary seldom went out among comparative strangers, and when they did were never at home until they got back again. By his own fireside he was hospitable to excess to all those whom common friends had franked into his company. But his manner upon such occasions was restless, and he was seldom himself, hardly ever self-revealing. He was, indeed, often captious and moody when away from the streets that he loved and his old London routine. Groaning heavily over his work, punning at funerals, guffawing at weddings, joking in perverse ways, sullen or commonplace with strangers, incommunicable, mentally absorbed, frequently making himself ill with gin or porter, tobacco or snuff, his little irregularities fenced him round as with a stockade which but very few trusted friends and chosen spirits were permitted to surmount. It is better to try to picture the author of the *Confessions of a Drunkard* as he really was than to conjure up a tea-party, babyfied figure of fond imagining

Of what he could be at his best we can get a glimpse, at any rate, from Hazlitt's *Conversation of Authors*—the most delightful and the most provoking, the most witty and the most sensible of men. "He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening. . . . No one ever stammered out such fine, piquant, deep, eloquent things in half a dozen half-sentences as he does. His jests scald like tears, and he probes a question with a play upon words. What a keen, laughing, hair-brained vein of home-felt truth! What choice venom! How often did we cut into the haunch of letters while we discussed the haunch of mutton on his table! How we skimmed the cream of criticism! How we got into the heart of controversy! How we picked out the marrow of authors! . . . With what a gusto would he describe his favourite authors, Donne or Sir Philip Sidney, and call their most crabbed passages *delicious*! He tried them on his palate, as epicures taste olives, and his observations had a smack in them, like a roughness on the tongue. There was no fuss or cant about him, nor were his sweets or his sours ever diluted with one particle of affectation."

When we read of these symposia we have little room to be surprised at Patmore's remark, that brilliant as Lamb's *Essays* and other writings appear, they were but as the mere spillings or forced overflowings of his mind and heart. On the other hand, he admits that he was frequently tongue-tied, especially in those later years of eagerly expected emancipation. Lamb's release from the desk (at which so many of his brightest letters were penned—during office hours),¹ and his retirement in 1825 from the India House, on the substantial pension of £450, instead of liberating, would seem to have had the very contrary effect upon his literary genius. He wrote but little after his fiftieth year; inconsolable for the loss of his old habitudes, he became a more "occasional writer" than ever before. He regretted London streets perhaps even more than his office, for he moved a year or two previously to Colebrook Cottage, Islington, exchanged in September, 1827, for a house on Chase Side, Enfield. He maintained a lively enough tone in his letters, but a kind of moody

¹ "I can write letters only at the Office." *Olim clericus*, C. L. "came home for ever" on March 29th, 1825. The office seemed to engender a peculiar whimsicality, shown especially in pretended libels on his friends. "I shall certainly go to the Naughty Man some day for my fibbings."

apathy seemed to be settling upon him as he got farther from London, that pole to which the needle of all his sympathies and affections vibrated. Weary of "all day long" days, "I hate the country!" became a not infrequent exclamation. He endured it, unselfish as usual, in the interest of his sister's declining health. "He felt the approaches of age; and while he pretended to cling to life, you saw how slender were the ties left to bind him." He had already laid aside his snuff-coloured habiliments for a suit of rusty black; we can see him in this garb with his wisp-like body and his shred-like legs, surmounted by that large Rabbinical head, a melancholy figure, patrolling the London road, or the less frequented lanes about Enfield. On one of these walks he fell down and injured his face. Erysipelas set in, and Charles Lamb

breathed his last (in the small cottage by Edmonton Church, to which he had recently removed from the neighbouring Enfield) on Saturday, December 27th, 1834, at the comparatively early age of fifty-nine. He was buried in Edmonton churchyard. His sister was deranged at the time, and was unable to assist. Lamb was thus a solitary figure at the last. We cannot by any stretch imagine him saying, as his friend Hazlitt had done upon his death-bed, "Well, I have had a happy life." This man, into whose spirit the essence of so much pure literature had entered, who had been the cause of so much pure and exquisite delight in others, was destined himself to suffer from many of the symptoms of a melancholy which even his old friend Burton had no power to exorcise.

II

IN Lamb we have an essayist of a rare distinction and choiceness of style superimposed upon a prose poet whose appreciation of the imaginative beauty inhaled in our old literature amounted to positive genius. In the widest sense, therefore, he was a critic, and a critic with no formidable rival. But as a professional working critic in the more restricted sense he yields the palm (he would certainly never have contested it) to William Hazlitt, whose community of tastes on some important literary topics paved the way for a friendship between two strangely dissimilar characters which endured several severe strains. Hazlitt was, as a critic, no spirit of innate literary genius like Lamb, but rather the natural product of a manly antagonism to the critical dogmatism of the great periodicals in their first enthusiasm of influential expansion. The two critics together might be compared grotesquely to earthworms passing the whole of English literature several times through their system, just as Darwin tells us those creatures pass the upper soil through their intestines, and so insensibly transforming the entire aspect of the literary landscape. In Lamb we are especially grateful for the sympathetic precision of taste and (rarely overdone) finish of phrase; in Hazlitt for the intellectual energy of appreciation which impelled him to elicit the life and spirit and truth from one author after another—an old author for preference, for contemporary writers, he admits, ranged

themselves but too often in his mind in two ranks, as friends and foes. In respect of his contemporaries, however, his judgments were in general less biassed than those of Charles Lamb. And even when his portraits are distorted likenesses, they are splendid caricatures.

A hardworking professional, writing against time for money, and never but on strict compulsion, his method was in almost every respect the exact antithesis of Lamb's. His early life was spent in systematic book storage. Facility of expression was painfully and arduously won. Until 1798, when he met his "first poet," he was dumb, inarticulate, helpless, like a worm by the wayside, endeavouring with anguish to put on paper the thoughts which oppressed him, shedding tears at his inability, and feeling happy if in eight years he could write as many pages. But when once he began to lift the books off his brain, and so to lighten the incubus of accumulation by utterance, then the floodgates were unchained and the pure current gushed out. "From a dumbness and diffidence extreme he developed into the readiest of writers; his sudden pages, year after year, transcribed in his slant large hand, went to the printers rapidly and at first draft." He soared easily and acquired a momentum in his prose which more nearly approaches that of impassioned utterance than any other writer with the solitary exception of Burke. Like him, he acquired the art of pouring out his mind on paper. We get a vivid

presentment of Hazlitt's system of writing from Patmore. Stimulated by the discovery that his purse was empty, the great critic began with the breakfast-things about him, and after an intense and anxious spasm of thought as to the framing of his first sentence wrote away steadily and with few pauses on a folio quire of paper, making scarcely any corrections, and completing his two or three thousand words by four in the afternoon, when he began to think about dinner. He never had any book or paper of any kind by him when he wrote, and the numerous quotations (nearly always inexact) with which his essays are studded were invariably the product of his memory. Well may it be said that his pen had become a sort of inspiration to him. He wrote things he had long pondered, and the pertinacity of his judgment was such that he practically never altered an opinion at which he had once deliberately arrived. Outspoken, unbending and austere, insurgent as he was in his political views, and remorseless in his denunciation of renegades, from the primitive radical faith of Horne Tooke, Thelwall, Price and the rest of the early English Jacobins, Hazlitt was really more of an artist and a sentimentalist than a politician, and as for his mode of life, it was æsthetic, Bohemian, and irregular in the extreme.

The restraints of domestic life were intolerable to him; he wanted to be alone (in a solitary tavern on Salisbury Plain by preference) to write; rough accommodation and coarse fare appeased him best;¹ "tinkering" was the ordinary state of his interior environment; save for two pictures (which served as a link with past aspiration and were treasured accordingly), he had no "property"; a fugitive amour seemed to furnish the emotional side of him with the stimulus it most required; he was a night rambler and a reveller in Rousseau, over whose *Héloïse* and *Confessions* he expended literally pints of tears. A nonjuror in religion, a shunner of churches and conventicles, a hater of constituted authorities of every kind, Hazlitt was in brief the exact type of man that police and paterfamilias hold in the most shuddering abhorrence.

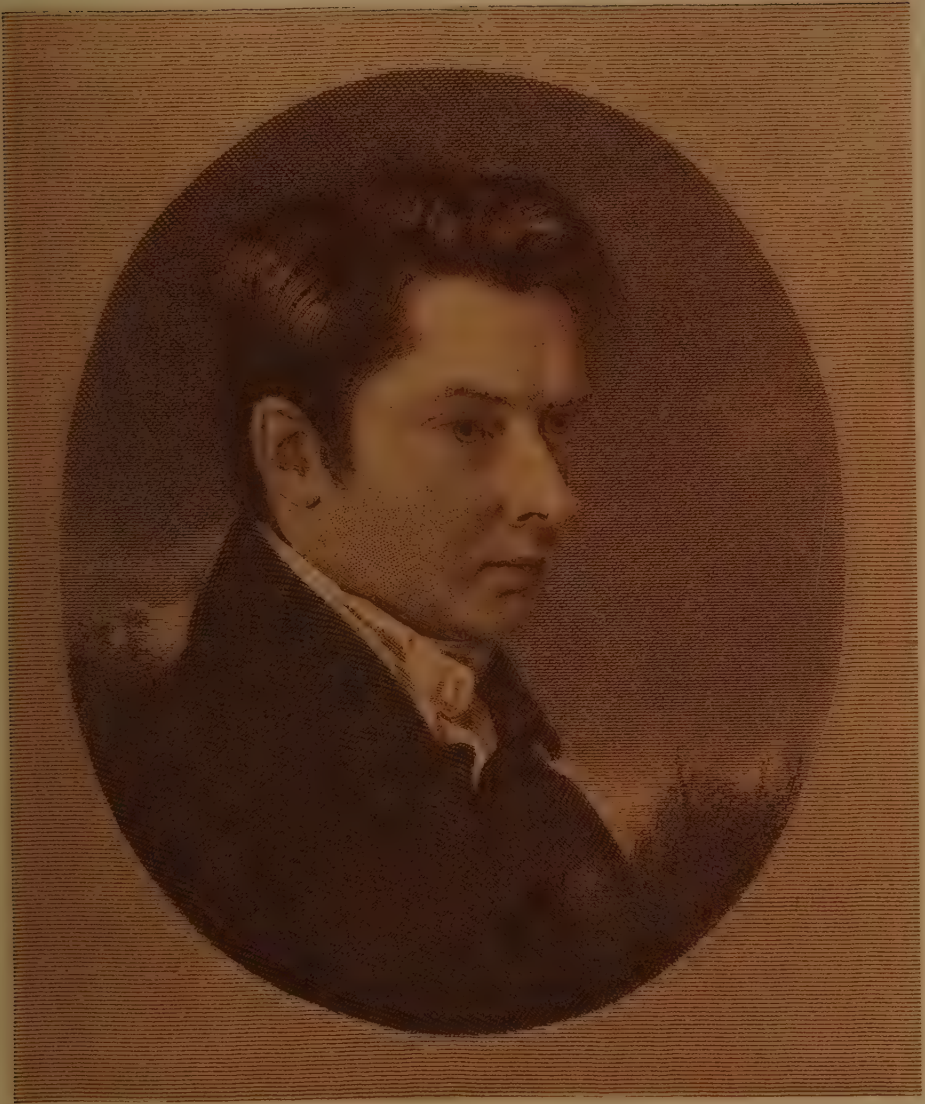
Of the antecedents of such a man we must say something, though not a word more than is strictly necessary. William Hazlitt was

born in Mitre Lane, Maidstone, on April 10th, 1778, three years after Charles Lamb. His father was an old-fashioned Presbyterian turned Unitarian, a National dissenter full of theology and old-fashioned seventeenth-century pride and resentment against a tyrannical Establishment; a good man who transmitted to his offspring an insuperable objection to swerve one hairbreadth from a settled conviction, however unpopular it might be: he "set up an image in his own mind—it was truth; he worshipped an idol there—it was justice." The young William Hazlitt spent his early years in Kent and Massachusetts, whither his father had moved in order to participate in the golden age to follow the American Rebellion. They returned home baffled and disappointed in 1787 and settled at Wem, ten miles from Shrewsbury, a place round which his early memories and affections clustered. His early education was gained mainly from his father, who wished him to be a minister, and packed him off at fifteen to the Hackney Unitarian College. But he did not like the idea, preferred theology, metaphysics, and politics, and specially lonely contemplation. He soon left the college and gave up the idea of being a minister.

In 1798 Coleridge came from Shrewsbury to visit Hazlitt *père*, and preached at Wem his farewell sermon, when Hazlitt saw him, and recorded his impressions in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*. Coleridge encouraged Hazlitt to write, and a new notion in metaphysics, which he thought he had excogitated, was worked up into *An Essay on the Principle of Human Action*, but it was not published till 1805. From 1798 to 1802 nothing is known of him. In 1802, at the suggestion of his brother John, a painter of some promise, who had some pieces in the Academy in 1788, he began to learn painting, and in October went out to study in the Louvre. After a stay of four months he came back to England, and soon made a fairly successful portrait tour in the north of England, painting amongst others Hartley Coleridge and Wordsworth. (But he tore up the latter's portrait, as it did not suit his ideals.) Indeed he could not satisfy his ambition, and after painting Lamb as a Venetian senator he gave up graphic art and took to literature.

In 1807 came his *Abridgment of the Light*

¹ His one luxury was Souchong tea, of which he consumed four ounces (at 12s. a pound) per diem.



William Hazlitt

of *Nature Pursued*, by Abraham Tucker, Esq., a skilful condensation of seven volumes in one; and also amongst other things, *The Eloquence of the British Senate; or, Select Specimens from the Speeches of the most distinguished Parliamentary Speakers, from the beginning of the reign of Charles I. to the present time*. This same year he married Sarah Stoddart, a friend of Mary Lamb, sister of Dr. Stoddart, a violent Liberal, whom he met at the house of John Lamb. She was thirty-two, and he twenty-nine. Her property, about £120 yearly, was settled, to Hazlitt's vexation, on herself. They went to live in a cottage at Winterslow, in Wilts, where the bride's property was situated, and where in later times, at the “Hut,” or Pheasant Inn, Hazlitt was fond of retiring for solitary work. Here was prepared his *Improved Grammar of the English Tongue* in 1810.

Children came and funds were scanty, and so in 1811 the family moved up to Westminster, that Hazlitt might get “into touch.” He began by lecturing at his own instance before the Royal Institution on English philosophers and metaphysicians, and by doing Parliamentary reporting (by long-hand notes, helped by his memory) for *The Morning Chronicle*. Soon he left this, and worked for *The Examiner*, *Champion*, and in 1814, on Jeffrey's invitation, for *The Edinburgh Review*.

In 1817 came the important *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, really “a discourse on the philosophy of life and human nature in general.” In 1818 all his dramatic criticisms were collected, under the title of *A View of the Stage*, exhibiting his love for the theatre, especially Mrs. Siddons and Edmund Kean. In 1819 he wrote his *Letter to William Gifford*, a spirited attack on the virulent malignity of *The Quarterly Review*. In 1821 came *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*. His criticism of the dramatists, based on six weeks' strenuous reading, is a remarkable testimony to his acumen, though it lacks the intimacy and familiarity of Lamb's celebrated notelets in his *Specimens*. This year, too, appeared *Table Talk*, containing some of his contributions to *The London*, and much of it composed at Winterslow Hut.

His domestic troubles had begun. In 1820 his father had died. His wife was a person of good taste, intellect and education, and of a

genial temper; but she had no sympathies or affections, was slovenly in her dress, and had no aptitude for domestic governance. Hazlitt, always of a peculiarly capricious and self-centred temperament, could not agree with her, and the only bond was their common love of their son William. Hazlitt often went down to Winterslow Hut to get out of her way. In 1820 he became violently enamoured of Sarah Walker, the wan-complexioned, “snake-like” daughter of his landlord, a tailor, in Southampton Buildings. She gave him a kiss each time she brought up his tray, but made no concealment of a previous attachment! She had no very obvious charms; but exhibited a reserved coquettishness which smote Hazlitt, and made him the victim of an infatuated passion, in the course of which he spouted out his woes to any mortal person who evinced the slightest kindness towards him, and finally to all the world in the *Liber Amoris*, or *The New Pygmalion*, an eloquent exposition of his feelings. In 1822 Mr. and Mrs. Hazlitt found their way to Edinburgh, where, after a residence of forty days, they secured a divorce after the Scottish custom, the various stages of which are drily noted in the wife's diary.

He soon recovered from his passion, and in 1824 married a Mrs. Bridgwater, widow of a captain of that name, with about £200 a year. In August of this year they took a long trip over the Continent, he describing the places he visited in letters to *The Morning Chronicle*. He returned to London without his wife. After a fortnight he wrote to her asking her when he should come and fetch her home. She replied that she had gone to Switzerland with her sister, and did not contemplate coming back.

In 1824 he had turned his attention to fine art criticism, producing the article in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on that subject and the *Sketches of the Principal Picture-Galleries of England*, containing some of his best work. In 1825 came the “Harvest Home” of his mind, *The Spirit of the Age, or Contemporary Portraits*. More essays followed in *The Plain Speaker* (1826), his last collection of essays given to the public. Two works of importance followed—the *Conversations of James Northcote, Esq., R.A.*, and the unequal *Life of Napoleon*, in four volumes. Idolatry of Napoleon had become to him not only a monomania, but a kind of touchstone which he applied to every

conceivable topic, personality, or philosophical system.¹

The stress of pecuniary difficulties and disappointments, which began with the failure of this book, had great effect on his health. In 1830 he moved from Bouverie Street to 6, Frith Street, Soho. Here he gradually sank. The events of July in France and the care of some of his friends revived him enough to write his paper on "Personal Politics," and he was glad to have seen the overthrow of the Bourbon dynasty. But he was in a state of great physical weakness, existing only by an "act of volition." He was unable to see his mother, who was away in Devonshire; but his last moments were solaced by the presence of Charles Lamb, from whom he had been partially estranged. He died on September 18th, 1830, and was buried in St. Anne's, Soho, where the epitaph was written by Charles Wells, author of *Joseph and his Brethren*.

Hazlitt's insight into his own character was acute, and a few words of his own on this head will do more to elucidate it than pages of ordinary roundabout comment. "I am not (he says), in the ordinary acceptation of the word, a good-natured man—that is, many things annoy me besides what interferes with my own ease and interest. I hate a lie. A piece of injustice wounds me to the quick, though nothing but the report of it reach me. Therefore I have many enemies and few friends." It was this strange angularity of the most rotund of writers which led him to wound so many of his fellow-authors in a manner which seems to us so perfectly unnecessary—Campbell, for instance, whom he rebuked for plagiarising Young and spoiling him at the same time, when he wrote of "Angels' visits few and far between" (in place of "short and far between.") So it came about that a new "portrait" by Hazlitt was nearly as much dreaded as a squib of Swift's, a satire of Pope's, a caricature of Foote's, or a *mot* of Douglas Jerrold's. "I am" (he writes in his famous account of the fight between Bill Neate and the Gasman) "under favour a sentimentalist myself." It is just this

overpowering sentiment in regard to literature which makes him so overwhelmingly good—when he is good.² The first rule of guidance for Hazlitt students should be this: always believe him when he praises; he is sure to be right. But when he denounces, be on your guard. Remember that he has no historic sense whatever, and is therefore most deficient in the due sense of historical continuity, gradation, subordination, and proportion. He had the defects of his qualities, but a grand quality indeed was his sturdy independence. "In both poetry and prose (as Mr. Birrell excellently says) Hazlitt's preferences were frankly avowed and his dislikes outspoken. He never hesitated to say as an author what he felt as a man. He belonged to no school or coterie. His knowledge and taste in poetry were increased and purified by his friendship with Lamb, and he had felt the stimulus of Coleridge in poetry as well as in metaphysics and politics. But he remained his own man—a solitary and independent figure. He liked Blair's *Grave* and Warton's *Sonnets*, and he said so. Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* bored him to death, and he said so. Sir Thomas Browne's strained fancifulness and jargonised speech teased him, and he said so. On the other hand, what member of the Anglican Church had so bathed the name of Jeremy Taylor in the sunshine of eloquent appreciation as has this Jacobinical son of a Socinian preacher?"³ On the other hand, too, it may be asked who has praised the Waverley Novels so eloquently or with such minute discrimination as has this sombre and splenetic Radical, to whom Scott's political views were as abhorrent as were his to Scott? A corollary of this extreme independence, combined with his undue æsthetic sensibility, and with his lack of historical perspective, is his excessive severity in regard to several of his greatest contemporaries—Shelley in particular, whom he described in a remarkable passage as a poor, pale, shrieking ghost, "with a fire in his eye, a fever in his blood, a maggot in his brain, a hectic flutter in his speech, which mark out the philosophic fanatic." We must describe

¹ Similarly "tyranny with Hazlitt is named Pitt, party spite is Gifford, apostasy is Southey, and fidelity Cobbett or Godwin."

² No literary critic perhaps has ever been such a complete master of the *frisson* as Hazlitt. Like Cobbett, he makes every personal whim or even prejudice an instrument or means of engendering emotion in the minds of his readers. Unlike Lamb, he left few letters, and those not of the first order of importance.

³ "For Drummond of Hawthornden, Suckling and Wither he exhibits an unexpected tenderness probably attributable to his spending an evening with Charles Lamb."

Hazlitt's critical and other essays, in fine, as being almost as original as they are scattered—all over the periodical press of his day, from *The Edinburgh Review* down to the most ephemeral sheet, such as *The Champion*, *The Liberal*, or *The Yellow Dwarf*. It is necessary to read of him primarily the *Sketches* and *Winterslow Essays*, the *Table Talk*, and *Lectures* (finer utterances than some of his on Shakespeare have never found expression in

writing), to be followed by Alexander Ireland's inimitable anthology of Hazlitt's prose entitled *William Hazlitt, Essayist and Critic*, and after these should come in due course the two substantive volumes, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) and *Notes of a Journey in France and Italy* (1826), reprinted from *The Morning Chronicle*. The reader who has perused these will join in acclaiming William Hazlitt *criticus criticorum*—the critic's critic.

BRYAN WALTER PROCTER (1787—1874), who adopted a crude anagram of his own name, "Barry Cornwall," as a pseudonym, now chiefly known through his friendship with Lamb and others of *The London* circle, was admired in his own day as a singing-bird worthy to rank with Hood and Mrs. Browning, if not with Keats and Tennyson. He was poet enough to share the testamentary generosity of John Kenyon and the large-hearted hospitality of Stedman in his book on the *Victorian Poets*. No one reads his songs or poems now, but few who are conversant with the literary asteroids of the period, and are interested in the literary history and biography of late Georgian and early Victorian days, would willingly miss his *Autobiography* (edited in 1877), in which he has much to say of Wainwright and other satellites of Lamb and his circle, or his finely sympathetic and discriminating memoir of Charles Lamb (1866).

Thomas Griffiths Wainwright (1794—1852), who wrote for *The London* and tried to conceal his barrenness under the pseudonyms of Janus and Egomet Bonmot, distinguished himself eventually as a forger and poisoner, and died in Van Diemen's Land at the age of fifty-eight in 1852. He owed his precocious position on the staff of contributors to the friendship of editor Scott for his grandfather Dr. Griffiths, the veteran pillar of *The Monthly Review*, and his status as a fellow-contributor once asserted, he was in a position to play the part of the "wise youth" to an amiable group of elders. A coxcombical young prig, over-dressed both mentally and bodily, glittering, false, he dished up the most insufferable art cant of the day about painting, painters and literary bric-à-brac. It seems strange that such a man should have enlisted the good word and even the kindly thought of Lamb and Hazlitt; still stranger is the indulgent eye with which so acute a critic as Hazlitt regarded Wainwright's prose, especially when we remember the acrimony with which he attacked the florid euphemisms of *Vivian Grey* in his essay on *The Dandy School*. The real apostle of this school was Wainwright. Janus dabbled in drawing and painting himself, and made some clever sketches in monochrome. His essays have been collected by W. C. Hazlitt. His literary talent, however, has been overrated.¹ He has no claim whatever to rank with erratic men of genius such as Villon or Cellini, B. V. Thomson, Oscar Wilde, Gorky, Casanova, or Verlaine. Criminologically he is more interesting as representing a perfect example of the intuitive criminal in his most highly developed and artistic state. He urged in extenuation of the cruel murder of his sister-in-law for her insurance money that she had such uncommonly thick ankles—fortunately a very rare phenomenon!

Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (1795—1854) retains a position as one of the figure-heads in nineteenth-century literature, if only as a link between Lamb and Hazlitt and Dickens and Bulwer. His copious memory on the subject of Lamb may have well been responsible for the introduction of *Elia* to the notice of Dickens, in whose characteristic humour a dew-drop of the incomparable essayist may occasionally be traced. The eloquent speech in behalf of the Copyright Bill (which Mahon and Macaulay eventually in 1848 succeeded in converting into law) was the ostensible cause of his being made the dedicatee of *Pickwick* in 1838. Son of a Reading brewer, Talfourd became known in literary circles as poet, dramatist, and as Lamb's perfervid "one admirer" (1815). A successful advocate, he was elevated to the bench in 1849. In English letters he is memorable less for his temporarily successful but utterly frigid plays, *Ion* (1836), *The Athenian Captive* (1838), and *The Massacre of Glencoe* (1840), than as the devoted friend, literary executor, and biographer of Lamb. His *Letters of Charles Lamb, with a Sketch of his Life* (1837) and *Final Memorials of Charles Lamb* (1848), incorporated in 1868 as *Memoirs of Charles Lamb*, are appreciative, interesting, and even eloquent, but only too skilfully generalised and "arranged." He also prefixed an able and discerning essay to the volume of Hazlitt's *Remains* in 1836. Florid, symmetrical, and unimpeachably correct, Talfourd is too comely a writer ever to be very profound. He brought a judicial sagacity to bear upon a quantity of literary material, rich almost beyond the dreams of avarice. Talfourd died of an apoplectic stroke in the middle of a speech at Stafford on March 13th, 1854.

¹ His life has inspired some well-known fiction. In Bulwer Lytton's *Lucretia* he appears as Varney, and Lucretia Clavering is supposed to be Mrs. Wainwright. The sight of him in Newgate and what he subsequently learned of his history from Barry Cornwall and Forster suggested to Charles Dickens the melodramatic novelette, *Hunted Down*. For his Life we would refer to the article in the *Dictionary of National Biography* with authorities there given, and for a very extreme estimate of his powers see B. Dobell's *Sidelights on Charles Lamb* (1903).

Peter George Patmore (1786—1855) deserves a short oar in this galley, less as the editor of *The New Monthly Magazine* during the interregnum between Theodore Hook and Harrison Ainsworth, and as a contributor to *The London*, than as the recipient of Hazlitt's effusions about the exquisite charms of his fair enslaver Sarah Walker, and as the gossiping biographer both of Hazlitt and Lamb (with others) in *My Friends and Acquaintances* (3 vols., 1854)—“a damned good book to steal from.” His *Rejected Articles* (1826), parodying Elia, Cobbett, Hazlitt, Byron, Hunt, etc., gained him introductions to a good many of the writers he ridiculed, “as gently as any sucking-dove,” in distant imitation of the Smiths, James and Horace. His gossip is most savoury when Hazlitt is the theme. He was born on Ludgate Hill and died at Hampstead, leaving among other children the poet Coventry Patmore, erst friend of Tennyson and author of *The Angel in the House*.

George Darley (1795—1846), another friend of *The London* group, who was praised by Lamb, a Dublin and a Trinity College man, came to London in 1822,¹ and wrote for *The London Magazine* as John Lacey, but suffered, poor man, from the suffocating “mask” of a terrible stammer, which debarred him almost wholly from the society that he loved. He wrote fanciful poetry, *inter alia* a lyrical drama called *Sylvia* (1827), of a pretty imitative kind not unworthy here and there to rank with Hood's *Midsummer Fairies*. A long Alastor-like poem called *Nepenthe* was privately issued in 1839. A few lyrics by Darley have charm but sadly lack originality. So intimate was his commerce with Wither, Suckling, and Carew, that Palgrave might almost be justified in ascribing one of his pieces to the natural school of Suckling:

“It is not beauty I demand,
A crystal brow, the moon's despair,
Nor the snow's daughter, a white hand,
Nor mermaid's yellow pride of hair.
“Tell me not of your starry eyes,
Your lips that seem on roses fed,

Your breasts, where Cupid tumbling lies,
Nor sleeps from kissing of his bed. . . .
“These are but gauds; nay what are lips?
Coral beneath the ocean stream,
Whose brink when your adventurer slips
Full oft he perisheth on them. . . .”

(*Golden Treasury*, 1st ed.)

Another lyric is said to have given Mr. George Meredith a hint for his finest poem, *Love in the Valley*. A third is the popular *I've been roaming*. Disappointed as a poet, Darley in 1829 became one of the Aspers of the infant *Athenæum*, flagellated friends and foes impartially, and contributed to the success of Talfourd's *Ion* by the sheer ferocity of his attack. However, he praised the first dramatic essays of Beddoes. He is said to have been a discerning critic, but his Introduction to the 1842 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher would hardly seem to support this pretension. He died on November 23rd, 1846.

Lamb has inspired most of his critics (Barry Cornwall, Talfourd, FitzGerald, W. C. Hazlitt, Ainger, Macdonald, E. V. Lucas), in support of which contention we may cite in illustration the last and the first of these same critics respectively. No classical writer in English has been more fully expounded than Charles Lamb by Mr. Lucas. Lamb and Hazlitt had much in common. Both loved literature, both loved portraiture and painting, both talked finely and hated cant, both, too, had sat at the feet of Coleridge. Each man was ripe for the other; and from 1804, when they met, onwards (“I stood well with him for fifteen years,” said Lamb), their intimacy was close and cordial, though not uninterrupted. “Hazlitt made it very difficult for the flame of friendship to burn with any steady radiance. Indeed, he made no friends in the ultimate sense of the word. He valued too much his independence, the right to say what he thought. He was one who said what was in his mind regardless of consequences, and he would never have brooked such an impediment to this luxury as a bond of love. Lamb also spoke his mind plainly, as he himself tells us; but Lamb was more catholic—he liked man as he ought not to be; and since he too had suffered, his plain speech was seldom unkind. It may often have been misunderstood, as every witty man's is certain to be, but it was never cruel. Hazlitt was critical to the uttermost fibre; he accepted nothing exactly as it was; he condemned roundly, and when he praised, praised usually by comparison. Tolerance was his bugbear. What he disliked he hated and despised. To hate may be a virtue, but to despise is a confession of failure as a philosopher and a citizen of the world; and Hazlitt's readiness to despise was his weakest point. It has kept him out of men's hearts as surely as Lamb's inability to despise has established his place there.”

In “his natural and healthy state” Lamb always admitted Hazlitt to be one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. “I get no conversation in London that is absolutely worth attending to but his.” Hazlitt is a great inspirer of literary thought to this day; but it may be admitted that E. V. Lucas is right in the main when he charges him with being positively anti-social, steeped in ink—a man with no tendrils, who nursed his faculties of hate with the utmost care and fondness.

“Persons who have been in the habit of traversing Covent Garden at that time (seven-and-forty years ago),” says the most vivid of Lamb's contemporary biographers, “might by extending their walk a few yards into Russell Street have noted a small spare man, clothed in black, who went out every morning and returned every afternoon, as regularly as the hands of the clock moved towards certain hours. You could not mistake him. He was somewhat stiff in his manner and almost clerical in dress, which indicated much wear. He had a long, melancholy face, with keen, penetrating eyes, and he walked with a short, resolute step, citywards. He looked no one in the face for more than a moment, yet contrived to see everything as he went on.

¹ A younger brother, Prof. Charles Darley of Cork, wrote the play *Plighted Troth* given by Macready in 1842, and pronounced superior to George's *Ethelstan*.

"Small and spare in person, and with small legs ('immaterial legs,' Hood called them), he had a dark complexion, dark, curling hair, almost black, and a grave look, lightening up occasionally and capable of sudden merriment. His laugh was seldom excited by jokes merely ludicrous; it was never spiteful, and his quiet smile was sometimes inexpressibly sweet: perhaps it had a touch of sadness in it. His mouth was well shaped; his lips tremulous with expression; his brown eyes were quick, restless, and glittering, and he had a grand head full of thought.

"His speech was brief and pithy; not too often humorous; never sententious nor didactic. Although he sometimes talked whilst walking up and down the room (at which time he seldom looked at the person with whom he was talking), he very often spoke as if impelled by the necessity of speaking—suddenly, precipitately. If he could have spoken very easily, he might possibly have uttered long sentences, expositions, or orations, such as some of his friends indulged in, to the utter confusion of their hearers. But he knew the value of silence, and he knew that even truth may be damaged by too many words. When he did speak, his words had a flavour in them beyond any that I have heard elsewhere. His conversation dwelt upon persons or things within his own recollection, or it opened (with a startling doubt, or a question, or a piece of quaint humour) the great circle of thought.

"Lamb was always dressed in black. 'I take it,' he says, 'to be the proper costume of an author.' When this was once objected to, at a wedding, he pleaded the raven's apology in the fable, that 'he had no other.' His clothes were entirely black, and he wore long black gaiters up to the knees. His head was bent a little forward, like one who had been reading; and, if not standing or walking, he generally had in his hand an old book, a pinch of snuff, or, later in the evening, a pipe. He stammered a little, pleasantly, just enough to make you listen eagerly for his words, always full of meaning, or charged with a jest, or referring (but this was rare) to some line or passage from one of the old Elizabethan writers, which was always ushered in with a smile of tender reverence.

"The room in which he lived was plainly and almost carelessly furnished. Let us enter it for a moment. Its ornaments, you see, are principally several long shelves of ancient books (those are his 'ragged veterans'). Some of Hogarth's prints, two after Leonardo da Vinci and Titian, and a portrait of Pope, enrich the walls. At the table sits an elderly lady (in spectacles) reading; whilst from an old-fashioned chair by the fire springs up a little man in black, with a countenance pregnant with expression, deep lines in his forehead, quick, luminous, restless eyes, and a smile as sweet as ever threw sunshine upon the human face. You see that you are welcome. He speaks: 'Well, boys, how are you? What's the news with you? What will you take?' You are comfortable in a moment. Reader! it is Charles Lamb who is before you.

"No one will love the old English writers again as *he* did. Others may have a leaning towards them—a respect, an admiration—a sort of *young* man's love: but the true relishing is over; the close familiar friendship is dissolved. He who went back into dim antiquity, and sought them out, and proclaimed their worth to the world—abandoning the gaudy rhetoric of popular authors for their sake—is now translated into the shadowy regions of the friends he worshipped. He who was once separated from them by a hundred lustres hath surmounted that great interval of time and space, and is now, in a manner, *their contemporary*."

By a subtle metempsychosis Charles Lamb has become one of his own "midnight darlings."

III

ONE of the most brilliant of the group of essayists and reviewers who gave to the periodical literature of the eighteen-twenties the momentum and excitement it had hitherto lacked, and has hardly ever since recovered, was an eloquent writer, known to all the "Lakists," yet so seldom seen in any other society that he became something of a mystery to the world at large—a mass of erudition, dreams, and drug, packed into a frail little body—the self-styled "English Opium-Eater."

Thomas de Quincey, whose father, a Manchester merchant, died of consumption in 1792, and whose mother was a rigidly pious friend of Hannah More's, was born in or near Manchester on August 15th, 1785. A minute account of his life up to the publication, in 1821, of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, is to be found in

those *Confessions* and the *Suspiria de Profundis*, in the *Autobiographical Sketches*, and, indeed, throughout all his writings on the most varied topics. Seldom was a writer more persistently autobiographical. As a boy, at "The Farm," and then at a country house called "Greenhay," both on the outskirts of Manchester, he was precocious, solitary, and gentle—"touched with pensiveness." Boisterous games he dreaded, and he was only driven to them for a time by William, his high-spirited elder brother. Instead, he made events out of shadows that usually pass more lightly over children. The death of his sister, Elizabeth, when he was six years old, affected him profoundly. He was introduced to life by death and sorrow, so to speak, and their mark remained on him until he, too, died. None the less, he studied. When, in 1796, he

went to Bath Grammar School, he knew much Latin and some Greek; but very soon he was able to speak, as well as write, both languages, and became "show-boy" of the school. Two years later an accident, resulting in an illness, caused his removal to a school at Winkfield, Wilts. "I was at the head of the school the whole time I was there," he wrote. In 1800 he made a tour in England and Ireland with Lord Westport, the young son of the Earl of Altamont, followed by a visit to Lady Carbery at Laxton, where he, the boy, instructed the ladies of the house in points of theology. His mind had received great stimulus; he was, in a sense, too old for school; but, towards the end of the year 1800, his guardians sent him to Manchester Grammar School, in order that, after three years there, he might gain an exhibition which, added to his patrimonial £150 a year, would during seven years give him the sum of £200 a year for his expenses at Oxford. Unhappily, the school did not suit him. The dullness of the place, the enforced lack of exercise, and, when his health broke down, the heroic doses given him by an old apothecary, reduced him to despair. At the end of nineteen months he ran away, with an English poet in one pocket and a volume of Euripides in the other. His subsequent wanderings in Wales, on an allowance of 21s. a week; his journey to London for the purpose of raising money on his expectations, and the delays in the process; his starving condition when he and a girl, half idiot, were alone in a large house in Greek Street, belonging to a money-lender's attorney, and he was glad to pick up a few crumbs of bread; the tender kindness of Anne, the girl "on the streets," their separation, and, after one or two days' absence, his fruitless search for her who, being less than womanly, was more than woman, and his poignant grief; all these privations and sorrows, that laid the foundation of his necessity for opium and bit so savagely into his soul, are set forth in the *Confessions*, where they lose nothing by being wedded to the phantasmagoria of his opium-dreams.

In 1803 he entered Worcester College, Oxford, on the books of which he remained until 1810. His excursions were frequent; in a visit to London he first learnt the virtues of opium. At Oxford he led the life of a recluse, taking opium at intervals, studying, and learning German and Hebrew under a

German friend, one Schwartzenburg. When he sat for his B.A. the examiner of his written paper on Greek said: "You have sent us one of the cleverest men I have ever met with." But next day he failed, for no apparent reason, to present himself at the oral examination in Latin, and left without taking his degree. Meantime he had been studying also the literature of his own country, and had acquired a boundless admiration for the Lake poets. The *Lyrical Ballads*, he afterwards wrote, were "the greatest event in the unfolding" of his mind. He saw Coleridge at Bridgewater in 1807. Wordsworth he had long wished to know, yet had not dared approach, so great was his reverence, and, no doubt, his shyness and habit of procrastination. Now, however, while escorting Mrs. Coleridge and her children to Southey's house at Keswick, he and his charges broke the journey at Grasmere, and stayed two days at Wordsworth's cottage. Next month he anonymously presented to Coleridge £300 that he could ill afford. The year 1809 saw him established in Wordsworth's cottage—Wordsworth only a mile away, at Allan Bank—and in the district Coleridge (occupied with *The Friend*), Charles Lloyd, John Wilson ("Christopher North"), and Southey. The death of Wordsworth's child, Kate, plunged De Quincey into intense grief. Otherwise, he was given up to a study of the German transcendentalists, and increasing doses of opium. During a visit to Edinburgh with Wilson he became known as a talker on all things under—and over—the sun; though he would always escape from the less congenial subjects, "not without some strictly logical sequence." After his return to the Lakes, his first period of excess in the use of opium made him incapable of any study; but in 1816, on the occasion of his marriage to Margaret Simpson, the daughter of a Westmoreland farmer, he suddenly reduced his daily allowance from 8,000 to 1,000 drops, was able once more to read Kant, and projected two sweeping philosophical works that never saw light—*De Emendatione Humani Intellectus*, and *Prolegomena to all Future Systems of Political Economy*. The latter did exist in manuscript, but its author, again prostrate beneath opium, could not rouse himself to write a preface and prepare it for the press! His fortune was gone; pecuniary difficulties pressed. To accept the editorship of a local Tory paper, *The Westmoreland*

Gazette, was a fall indeed; and to no purpose; for, though De Quincey was a thorough-going Tory of the old sort, his learned influence went for nothing in electioneering tactics. It was well that the publication of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*, signed "X. Y. Z.", in *The London Magazine*, September and October, 1821, brought him at once popularity and notoriety. Thenceforward, armed with an immense store of miscellaneous learning and curious experiences, he entered into the field of periodical literature as "The English Opium-Eater."

Apart from the deaths of his sons and his wife—who had cared well for her procrastinating,¹ unpractical, opium-eating husband—in 1837, his subsequent life was uneventful. His connection with *Blackwood's* and *Tait's Magazines* took him much to Edinburgh; at Lasswade he rented a cottage for his daughters and himself in 1840. But though that was home, he had a habit of constantly disappearing into some lodging or other in Edinburgh or Glasgow. When one room became "snowed up" with books and papers, he would simply move on to another, and, in this way, he was once paying the rents of no less than four apartments. The opium was never entirely discontinued, as he would have his readers understand from the *Confessions*. "Quand je le connus," says that acute critic, Baudelaire, writing of the supposed freedom from opium, "malgré tout son appareil de minutieuse vraisemblance, je m'en défiai instinctivement. . . . (il) me parut une invention en faveur d'un certain cant britannique. . . ." And Baudelaire's critical instinct was right. Excesses notwithstanding, there is little doubt that the drug prolonged De Quincey's life. After a last crisis in 1848, he found out the minimum dose per diem on which he could exist, and kept to it. His gastric disorders required him to eat carefully chosen food—tripe, or a slice from a loin of mutton, "cut in a diagonal rather than a longitudinal form," as he once told the cook of a house he was visiting. He slept by day, and worked, conversed, or walked by night. Then the old man, always a great walker, would go for long rambles around Lasswade, sometimes, like Charles Lamb, "sleeping out." In money matters he was a child. If he wanted silver, a

banknote was useless to him; it did not occur to him to change it. His politeness to every one was excessive—nervously so; his explanations and excuses complex and couched in exquisite language. Those who wished for his company had not only to invite him, but to fetch him; for his growing timidity and love of solitude caused him to break all engagements. But if caught, the little man, dressed in such nondescript garments that he looked like a street-urchin, would wake up fully as the evening went on and converse, not greedily, like Coleridge, but with the most courteous attention to what others had to say. "Oh, what a voice!" said Miss Martineau; "so clear, so soft, so sweet; so delightful a contrast to the way people have of bawling at me." "A bright, ready, and melodious talker; but in the end an inconclusive and long-winded. [De Quincey was certainly not vehement like Carlyle.] One of the smallest man-figures I ever saw: shaped like a pair of tongs; hardly five feet in all. When he sat, you would have taken him, by candle-light, for the beautifullest little child—blue-eyed, blonde-haired, sparkling face, . . . had there not been something, too, which said, 'Eccovi, this child has been in hell!'"

Reverting to his childhood, with a cry of "Sister! sister! sister!" De Quincey died December 8th, 1859, and was buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, Edinburgh, twenty days before the death of Macaulay.

All of De Quincey's works, with the exception of a poor novel, *Klosterheim*, and the *Logic of Political Economy*, were published, in the first place, in *Blackwood's*, *Tait's*, and *The London Magazines*, *Hogg's Instructor*, and other periodicals. His collected works, with considerable amplifications and corrections (the *Confessions* were increased to nearly thrice their original length), were not issued until 1853 and after. Few writers of periodical literature have had his wideness of erudition; few have written even tolerably on such varied topics. At one time it was a quasi-historical narrative, *The Revolt of the Tartars*; at another, *The Theory of Greek Tragedy, On the Political Parties of Modern England, Miracles as Subjects of Testimony, Kant in his Miscellaneous Essays, The Juggernaut of Social Life, The Casuistry of Roman Morals, Goethe, The Cæsars, China,*

¹ "Has the little animalcule crawled over the rubric at last?" wrote Lamb, when he heard of De Quincey's marriage!

Recollections of the Lake Poets, and many personal and critical articles on his contemporaries, articles on *Style*, literary criticism and history, or articles and sketches avowedly autobiographical. His mind was not so much creative and synthetic, as logical and analytical; capable of assimilating an immense amount of reading and then of seizing analogies, making precise comparisons and subtle differentiations. Combine this with a faculty of reverie and dreaming (operations only slightly, or not at all, under the control of the conscious will), intensified to a high degree by opium, enabled to express itself by means of a fine ear for words and rhythms; and we have, on the one side, his dreams, analysed and set forth with all the flavour of reality in gorgeous, "impassioned prose," and, on the other side, his often unsatisfactory disquisitions about matters philosophical, critical, and economic. For a writer with such pretensions to metaphysical knowledge, his philosophical articles are not so important as might have been expected: nor is his work on economics; his historical research has been superseded; his theology never made much mark. His articles on contemporaries, *William Wordsworth*, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, *Charles Lamb*, *Wordsworth and Southey*, and others, will always be interesting; though his criticism, at times subtle enough, is too often marred by limited sympathy. He was one of the first to appreciate the greatness of Wordsworth; but passages like his discussion on the poet's legs, considered as objects of doubtful beauty and as objects of utility, or his solemn paragraph on the sole time "Wordsworth became inebriated at Cambridge" and "was not too far gone to attend chapel decorously during the very acme of his elevation," now seem nothing short of comic. Yet they caused maddening irritation when published, as also did his exposure of Coleridge's plagiarisms.

The effectiveness, as a whole, of nearly everything De Quincey wrote is greatly spoiled by his long digressions. It is quite true to say that each digression almost always winds back to the subject with a fresh freight of meaning to be incorporated in the argument, and that there is pleasure in observing the ingenuity with which it is done. The fault, indeed, arose partly from his sense of precision and his nervous desire to be perfectly understood. At the same time, the magnitude of the freight is usually incommensurate with the length of the digres-

sion; and literature is not read for the ingenuity with which it has been produced. One of the worst examples of his much ado about little is the *Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected*, and this fault of De Quincey's is admirably parodied and befustigated in Lamb's funny skit, *Letters to an Old Gentleman whose Education has been Neglected*. Though his exquisite style is in everything he wrote, it is fairly safe to say that his humorous articles and his "modes of impassioned prose" are those portions of his work that have survived solely because of their own intrinsic merits.

De Quincey's humour does not bear comparison with Lamb's; for example, it is sometimes feeble, sometimes heavy, sometimes out of place; but, nevertheless, it is quite genuine. He was expert in developing, with strict logic, an absurd or wildly improbable premiss, and brought to the task an inimitable mixture of slang and classical expressions, colloquialism and rhetoric. *The Spanish Nun*, an historical narrative, is full of strokes of humour, which, in fact, are to be met with in much of De Quincey's work on more serious topics. *Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts*, with the grim, uproarious fun of the dinner given by the Connoisseurs in Murder, the toasts, and the Latin glee which was composed for the occasion is, perhaps, the best of all. Toad-in-the-Hole, a misanthropic disparager of inartistic modern assassinations, is so delighted with the Williams murders that he has proposed a dinner in honour of the event:

At length came the toast of the day—*Thugdom in all its Branches*.

The speeches attempted at this crisis of the dinner were past all counting. But the applause was so furious, the music so stormy, and the crashing of glasses so incessant, from the general resolution never again to drink an inferior toast from the same glass, that I am unequal to the task of reporting. Besides which, Toad-in-the-Hole now became ungovernable. He kept firing pistols in every direction; sent his servant for a blunderbuss, and talked of loading with ball-cartridge. We conceived that his former madness had returned at the mention of Burke and Hare; or that, being again weary of life, he had resolved to go off in a general massacre. This we could not think of allowing; it became indispensable to kick him out, which we did with universal consent, the whole company lending their toes *uno pede*; as I may say, though pitying his grey hairs and his angelic smile. During the operation the orchestra poured in their old chorus. The universal company sang, and (what surprised us most of all) Toad-in-the-Hole joined us furiously in singing—

"Et interrogatum est ab omnibus—Ubi est ille Toad-in-the-Hole?
Et responsum est ab omnibus—Non est inventus."

The *Confessions*, the *Suspiria de Profundis*, and *The English Mail-Coach*, may be cited as containing the best examples of De Quincey's "modes of impassioned prose ranging under no precedents that I am aware of in any literature." In "elaborate stateliness," rhythm, flexibility, colour, and use of *le mot propre*, he is pre-eminent. He was one of the founders of the conscious art of prose for prose's sake; prose without pretext, one might call it, if pretext is understood to mean material and argumentative utility. He did much to counteract Dr. Johnson's "plethoric and tautologic tympany of sentence," and to transpose the influence of the Lake Poets from metrical to unmetrical English. Before the third section of *The English Mail-Coach* he placed a quotation which may well be taken as descriptive of his aim and, moreover, of his achievement:

Whence the sound
Of instruments that made melodious chime
Was heard, of harp and organ; and who moved
Their stops and chords was seen; his volant touch
Instinct through all proportions low and high
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.
Paradise Lost, Bk. xi.

But the fugue. . . . Or is it the instruments? or the player? There is an elusive something in De Quincey's prose that too often prevents it from being completely satisfying; some note out of tune or chord out of place, some defect in *timbre*. Maybe it is the occasional obtrusion of early Victorian pseudo-emotional expressions, such as we still hear in drawing-room songs; maybe a too visible art gives an impression of insincerity. He never quite equalled Sir Thomas Browne, whose writings he knew well, but whose precedence he overlooked in speaking of impassioned prose. The styles of both are like a great river; but whereas the river suggested by the earlier writer appears living by reason of the swirl and eddy of its abundant waters, the other lives more in its ripples, which, beautiful and light-reflecting as they are, tend to obscure the profounder depths. Too often De Quincey, after marvellously developing his sublime or pathetic theme, ends without the *veritable cri du cœur* (not necessarily *de son propre cœur*, of course), which

only can then satisfy; but brings about the climax with a grossly mechanical artifice—less a digression than a suspension—and more words. "Oh, heavens!" cries De Quincey, in effect; "what a happening! How sublime! how pathetic!" But the reader answers back, "Ye gods! what a writer!"

This, however, is not to say that his achievement is less than very great. The passage from Milton *does* describe his prose. Witness the magnificent apostrophe to his opium:

O just, subtle, and all-conquering opium! that, to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that "tempt the spirit to rebel," bringest an assuaging balm;—eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath, pleadest effectually for relenting pity, and, through one night's heavenly sleep, callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure from blood;—O just and righteous opium! that to the chancery of dreams summonest, for the triumphs of despairing innocence, false witnesses; and confoundest perjury; and dost reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges;—thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles—beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and, "from the anarchy of dreaming sleep," callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the "dishonours of the grave." Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium!

Few can forget *The Daughter of Lebanon*, most pathetic and solemn rebirth in his dreams of Anne, the Pariah; and fewer are able to say that they cannot recognise one at least of Our Ladies of Sorrow—*Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears, *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs, and *Mater Tenebrarum*, Our Lady of Darkness—even if they have never "walked in all their kingdoms"; in such wise has De Quincey created with words "sublime goddesses" that were not his alone. From the death of his sister he began to know them; and he is, perhaps, at his greatest when he touches the sorrows of pensive children—those terrible griefs that most men cannot remember; that, if denied outside solace and distraction, can never find them in the unknowing child, and must encircle him with impenetrable gloom. These De Quincey remembered, and here his note is true.

CHAPTER IV

SIR WALTER SCOTT

"Scott raised the literature of the novel into one of the greatest influences that bear on the human mind; breathing into it a new spirit, giving it a fulness and universality of life, a romantic charm, a dignity and elevation, and thereby a coherence, a power and predominance, which it never had before. In his hands it became a spring of health, a wholesome, beneficent influence, delightful, instructive, ennobling, a liberal education in itself, as well as a great comfort and solace amid the trials and troubles of life."—ANON.

"The search for the single final epithet is no part of Scott's method, for he delights in the telling, and is sorry when all is told. The asceticism of style belongs to a different race of artists, the lesser of whom are sadly anæmic. Sir Walter Scott is the first of the modern race of giants in fiction; his rapid series of great novels inaugurates a new era."—PROF. RALEIGH.

Early training—the Scott group—*Border Minstrelsy*—Abbotsford—Ruin—The *Opus Magnum*—Voyage to Italy—The End—Greatness of Scott's output—His manifold influence.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, the ninth of twelve children, of whom six died young, was born in College Wynd, Edinburgh, on August 15th, 1771. His father, Walter Scott (born 1729), was an Edinburgh attorney, shrewd, old-fashioned, a staunch Calvinist and antiquary. He married in 1758 Anne Rutherford, daughter of a Professor of Medicine at Edinburgh, of good Border descent. Scott himself had a thread of the attorney in him; but he took less after his father than after his grandfather, Robert Scott of Sandyknowe, a successful farmer and sportsman, and more after his great-grandfather, Beardie Scott (so-called because he had never cut his beard after the banishment of the Stuarts, in whose cause he lost almost all that he had). When he was a child, Walter was boarded out for his health's sake at Sandyknowe, where he lived in the open air under the charge of a shepherd, and learnt from his grandmother many songs and legends of the old moss-troopers and of his Border ancestry.¹ In October, 1778, he went to the High School at Edinburgh,

where he was the meteor of his form; thence to the College of Edinburgh.

In 1786 Scott was apprenticed to his father; in the next year he saw Burns (remarking those eyes of his which glowed like live coals) at Prof. Ferguson's, and was thanked by him for giving the authorship of a quotation which no one else in the company knew. In 1792 he was called to the Bar; this was the year of his first raid into Liddesdale to look for ballads (he had begun collecting at twelve) along with Mr. Shortrede, the Sheriff-Substitute of Roxburgh, who accompanied him in all these expeditions for seven years. A year later he saw the scenery of *The Lady of the Lake*, and heard from old men such stories of the Highlands as formed the groundwork of many of his novels. He took up German, which at that time meant romance and poetry, and in 1795 made his spirited version, called *William and Helen*, of Burger's spectre ballad, *Lenore*. Later he translated Goethe's adventurous drama of *Goetz of the Iron Hand* (1799). Foreign romance

¹ "I never acquired a just pronunciation, nor could I read with much propriety." At Bath (about 1778) he met John Home, author of *Douglas*, and at Prestonpans, where he went for sea-bathing, George Constable, an old friend of his father's, the original of Monkbarns, who told him much about Falstaff and Hotspur, and furnished him with not a little material for Dalgetty. He read as a child Bunyan, Pope's *Homer*, and Ramsay's *Evergreen*. But his first love among books as a boy was Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. "I waded into the stream of books like a blind man into a ford without the power of searching my way unless by groping for it." Small accidents and self-will prevented him from learning Greek—a circumstance which he always regretted. But after leaving school he learned Italian, and during an illness read Vertot's *Malta* and Orme's *Indostan*. He always fixed "like a tiger" on old songs and ballads.



From the Painting by Thomas Faed, R.A.

Sir Walter Scott and His Friends

and historical fiction doubtless helped him to find his way among his own subjects, the mingled likeness and difference of the German work quickening (if that were possible) his interest in kindred themes at home, such as *True Thomas* or *Kinmont Willie*, and encouraging him to think of modern renderings on his own account. For a time he was strongly affected by the German manner, not to his advantage, and indulged in horrors written at the request of "Monk" Lewis, and too like Mr. Lewis's own productions. A disappointment in love, referred to long afterwards in Scott's Journal, was at the time kept to himself;¹ it was not his habit to complain. After his marriage to Miss Charpentier on Christmas Eve, 1797, he had many years of prosperity before him, making himself known as "the hardest worker and the heartiest player," and steadily going on with his poetry, then all his novels—at the same time carrying on all sorts of historical and antiquarian researches, besides miscellaneous literary work by the way, not to speak of his duties as Sheriff of Selkirk, and (after 1806) as Clerk of Session. He had also a commission in the Edinburgh Light Horse (a yeomanry regiment), and did not neglect his military calling. In 1803 he began writing in *The Edinburgh Review* on such subjects as Spenser, old ballads, Chatterton, *Amadis*, and old English poetry. He had become renowned as a raconteur, and was much sought after as an ornament of clubs and convivial parties. He took a leading part in the foundation of some of the leading publishing clubs, notably "The Bannatyne." He was surrounded from an early age by a group of friends who were staunch and sympathetic with his interests, and gave him a good deal of raw material to be worked up by the imagin-

ative process of which he had the monopoly. Among them were William Erskine, to whom he submitted many of his proofs; John Leyden, a great ballad-hunter; James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd; William Laidlaw, a Yarrow farmer; and, above all, the ingenious but somewhat indolent William Clerk, the Darsie Latimer of *Redgauntlet*, as the two Fairfords, father and son, are Walter Scott senior and junior.

In December, 1799, Scott was appointed Sheriff-Depute of Selkirkshire, which brought him in £300 per year for light work and a closer connection with his favourite district. He now set about ballad-hunting in earnest with the help of the book-learning friends he was accumulating about him, such as Heber, Ellis, and Ritson; and the three volumes of his *Border Minstrelsy* appeared in 1802-3 from the press of the brothers Ballantyne, with whom he now first formed a close connection. The old ballads which he collected served as an introduction to several fine imitations of his own, including *The Eve of St. John* in the traditional manner and the stirring *Lay of Cadyow Castle*, a ballad of the murder of the Regent Murray. This led in its turn to Scott's first long poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (published 1805), the success of which was such as to determine the future of his whole career. It is a work rather of an enthusiastic Border archæologist than of a great poet. But the combination of a music which was still unfamiliar (for *Christabel* was not yet published) with great narrative power "in a light horseman kind of stanza" took the public by storm.²

The year 1808 saw Scott's poetical reputation brought to its zenith by the publication of *Marmion* (the finest, or very near it, of all battle

¹ The lady was a daughter of Sir John Stewart Belches, and Scott dreamed ardently of *Le Manteau Vert*, as he called her, for three years, followed by two years of disappointment. Miss Charpentier is probably outlined in Julia Mannering.

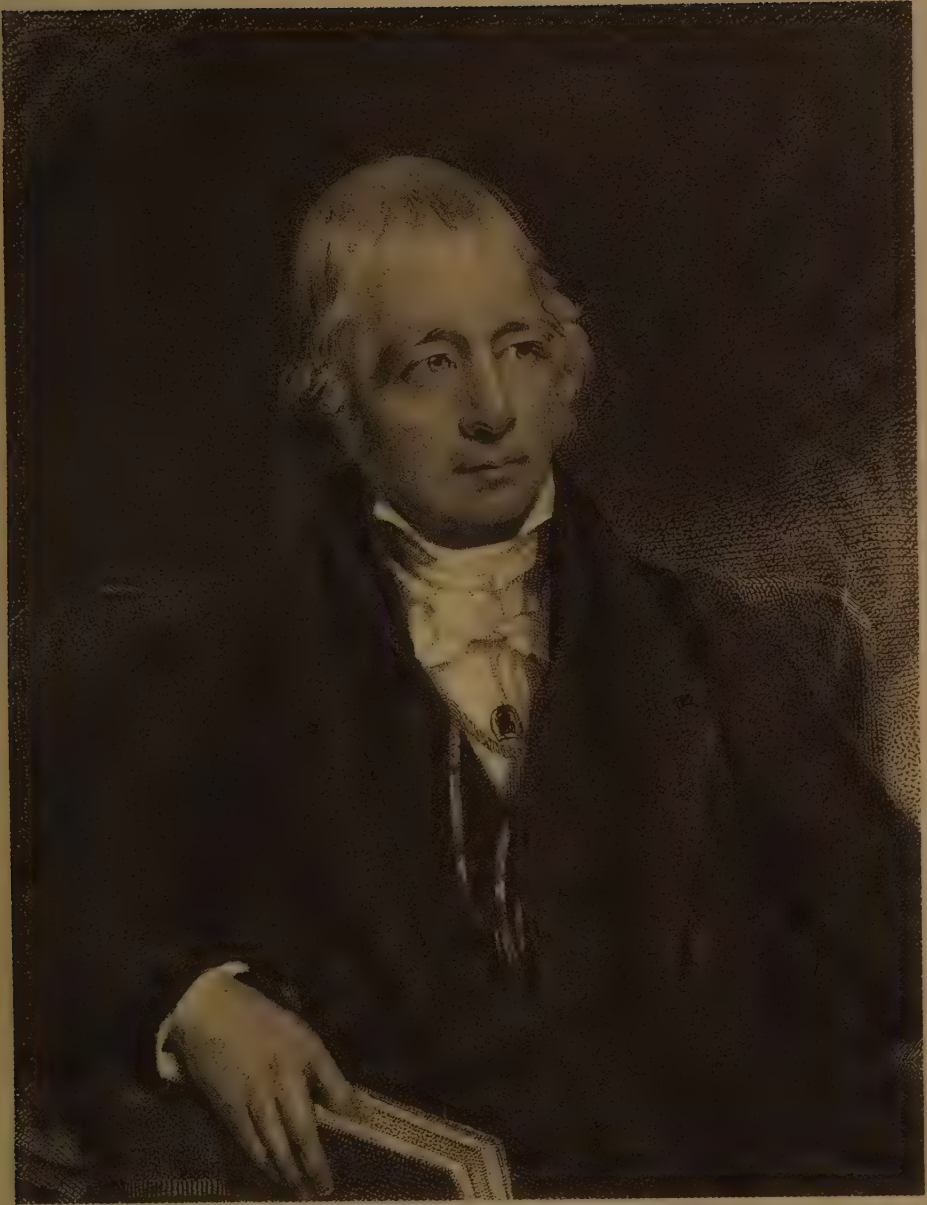
² "In their own days the Border riders were regarded as public nuisances by statesmen, who only attempted to educate them by the methods of the gibbet. But now they were the delight of fine ladies contending who shall be most extravagant in encomium. A blessing on such fine ladies, who know what is good when they see it."—LANG. Jeffrey himself was converted by *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810.

Scott's marriage brought him an annuity of £500. He was very well off, therefore, when in 1805 he settled at Ashiestiel on the Tweed, where he maintained a considerable household (though far less than Abbotsford, where twenty lady's-maids are described as finding harbourage with their mistresses at one time.) He was, however, far from satisfied with his revenue, and began now his secret and speculative association with the Ballantynes. He began his edition of Dryden, and adopted the habits which enabled him to carry through his labours. He gave up his previous plan of sitting up late, rose at five, dressed carefully, was at his desk by six, and before the family breakfast had broken the neck of the day's work. A couple of hours afterwards he finished his writing and was his own man by noon. At Ashiestiel he rode out, coursed with his greyhounds, or joined in "burning the water" as described in *Guy Mannering*. He answered every letter the same day he got it, and so got through an amazing amount of work.

rants, composed during gallops among Tweed-side hills), for which Constable offered to pay £1,000 in advance before he had seen the poem. Jeffrey was almost alone in his disapproval of it. The poem as a whole, with its six interesting introductory epistles, forms a series of historical chapters or tableaux of Border life at the opening of the sixteenth century, representing respectively the castle, the convent, the inn, the camp, the court, the battle. It is doubtful how far Jeffrey's coldness led to Scott's estrangement from *The Edinburgh*; but in the course of 1808 he was committed to the cause of the rival *Quarterly Review*, and at loggerheads both with Jeffrey and with Constable. His annoyance with the latter and his growing fondness for commercial speculation caused him to take the false step of setting up a rival publishing house in Edinburgh as John Ballantyne & Co., the ostensible manager being a brother of the printer. Already by 1813 their affairs were in a most embarrassed state, and but for the intervention of Constable the firm must have gone into bankruptcy. All might have still gone well had not Scott been seized by an imperious passion for adding to his landed property at Abbotsford, a weakness of which his neighbours the vendors well knew how to take advantage, and his determination to adorn his estate with a feudal mansion and museum of antiquities in one. On this last hobby alone he spent nearly £80,000. The money, in many cases, could only be obtained by advances from Constable on unwritten poems or novels. A diversion was produced in 1814 by the transshipment of Scott's talents from the metrical tale, in which he had recognised a superior in Byron, to the prose romance, in which it was fairly impossible that he should have a competitor. In the summer of 1814 Scott accidentally found the manuscript of an old novel which he had begun (in light-hearted rivalry with Strutt's *Queenhoo Hall*) and laid aside in 1805. In the course of three weeks in June he added sixty-five chapters to the seven or eight which he had already written. The story so completed was entitled *Waverley, or 'Tis Sixty Years Since*.* It was published anonymously on July 7th, 1814, and, when Scott returned from a short summer tour to the Orkneys and Shetlands, he found that *Waverley* was making a startling success; such a success ensured the postponement at least of all pecuniary difficulties.

For the next ten years Scott was pouring

out the series of novels, displaying an energy and fertility of mind which make the feat one of the most remarkable recorded in literary history. The main interruption was in 1815. All his patriotic feelings had been stirred to the uttermost by the concluding scenes of the war, and he went to France in August, visited Waterloo, saw the allies in Paris, met Castle-reagh and "with emotions of awe" the Iron Duke himself, and was kissed by the Hetmann Platoff. Scott's impressions on this tour were described by him in *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* (1816), and in an uninspired poem on *The Field of Waterloo*, published in October, 1815, for the benefit of soldiers' widows. His last poem of any length, *Harold the Dairntless*, was published in January, 1817, as "by the author of *Triermain*," and had, says Lockhart "considerable success," but not such as to encourage him to further attempts in the same line. His second novel *Guy Mannering** rivalled *Waverley* in its success, and in the spring of 1816 came *The Antiquary*, perhaps of all his works the one in which there is the nearest reflection of the bent of his own mind. It was scarcely finished before he designed the *Tales of my Landlord*, the first series of which, *The Black Dwarf* and *Old Mortality** came out as by a new author in December, 1816. As before, the cloak of anonymity was virtually a transparent one, for Scott seemed to estimate all his work alike as so much scribbling, and he willingly turned aside from his best novel to write "Historical Summaries" for *The Edinburgh Annual Register*, which he struggled in vain to make a success. From this time till the close of 1825—a space of eight years—prosperity rested unclouded over the life of Scott. His novels of *Rob Roy** (December, 1817), *The Heart of Midlothian**, *The Bride of Lammermoor**, *The Legend of Montrose**, *Ivanhoe**, *The Monastery*, *The Abbot*, *The Pirate*, *Kenilworth*, *The Fortunes of Nigel**, *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward**, *St. Ronan's Well*, *Redgauntlet**, and the *Tales of the Crusaders* (*The Talisman* and *The Betrothed*), streamed from his pen with a rapidity as wonderful as their general merits were great. Europe read with delight, and Scott was happy to pipe a dance which led to such solid results for his own benefit. Such a matter of successful authorship was a surprising novelty in its day. Both writer and publisher seemed to have regarded Scott's talent as an inexhaustible



From the Painting by John Graham Gilbert.

Sir Walter Scott

gold-mine. At Christmas, 1824, Abbotsford was finished, and six weeks later Scott's eldest son was married to an heiress, Scott presenting him with a captaincy in the Hussars. All this year the new laird, who had been honoured with a baronetcy in March, 1820, was entertaining on a princely scale. The English sales of the novels had fallen off slightly since the appearance of *The Monastery*, but Scott himself was hardly aware of this, and he may be considered to have been at the height of his fortunes at the time of his son's marriage. His career had hitherto been an almost uninterrupted series of prosperous and happy events; he had risen from being a briefless barrister to a position as undisputed head of the literary world, with a title and a landed estate which he had every prospect of bequeathing to his successors.

The inevitable crash came finally in December, 1825. From a Journal which Scott began a few days before the rumours of the ultimate *débâcle* got too clamorous to be silenced, we learn how he bore from day to day the rapidly unfolded prospect of unsuspected liabilities. He put off facing the crisis as long as he could, but when there was no alternative he rallied all his forces and faced it with the utmost courage. A few weeks revealed the unpleasant truth that the failure of the London house threw upon him personal responsibility for £130,000. He received many offers of help, which he refused. He might have been adjudged a bankrupt and paid so much in the pound; but he refused to close the account with his creditors, from whom he only asked time to pay off the whole of the debt. He went on writing without a moment's delay, and two months' work produced *Woodstock*,* one of the finest of the later novels, for which he received over £8,000. In *The Fair Maid of Perth* and *Anne of Geierstein* he produced two novels almost as good, while in *Tales of a Grandfather* and the *Life of Napoleon* he finished two of his longest and most arduous prose tasks. An even more remunerative project was the reissue of his novels with new introductions and notes, in a new edition to which he gave the title of *opus magnum*. In the meantime, he was allowed to retain possession of Abbotsford and of the collections which he had formed there. His faculty for prose romance seems to have developed something like a passion for the

work, and he was "conspiring" a new novel to the very last, in opposition to the wishes of his admirers, who recognised that the public taste was getting sated by work finely sustained as it still was, both by History and by Humour. To obtain more time for literary task work, he resigned his clerkship on a retiring allowance of £800 a year. His zeal was stimulated by the idea that he would still be able to pay off the debt, and is illustrated by the fact that having finished *Anne of Geierstein* one morning before breakfast, he commenced his short *History of Scotland* for Lardner's series immediately after that meal; but he received an unmistakable warning in February, 1830, when an apoplectic attack left him speechless and senseless on the floor. The ultimate discharge of the debt was now assured, yet, after declining a pension and a privy councillorship from the Government, Scott commenced boldly upon a new novel, *Count Robert of Paris*, dictating regularly to his faithful henchman Laidlaw, who fortunately regarded it as one of his best works. Another seizure took him in November, and the need for diminishing his exertions became every day more apparent; yet it seemed almost impossible to his advisers to combat a mind acting under such powerful impulses. In July, 1831, he secretly commenced his last novel, *Castle Dangerous*; a little later, by happy inspiration, the Admiralty put a frigate at his disposal for a Mediterranean cruise, which seemed to offer a chance of prolonging his life. During November and December he visited Malta and Naples, and actually wrote a new story upon the Siege of Malta, in addition to continuing the prefaces to the novels. The interesting introduction to *Redgauntlet* is dated April 1st, 1832; a fortnight later he left Naples for Tweedside by way of Rome, Tyrol, and the Rhine. He was deeply affected upon his arrival home in July, and for a time seemed to recover a little from the paralytic state into which he had fallen during the journey.

On September 17th he spoke his last words to his future biographer and son-in-law, Lockhart, "My dear, be a good man." Four days later he breathed his last in the presence of all his children. "It was a beautiful day and so warm that every window was wide open—and so perfectly still, that the sound of all others most delicious to his ears, the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles, was

distinctly audible as we knelt round the bed, and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes."¹

Scott has no formal claims like Shakespeare or Swift to a supreme or even great mastery in prose and verse. But taken for all in all he has built up in the *Waverley Novels* and in his songs an edifice which we should regret the loss of as we should regret that of but one work in our literature, *The Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies of Mr. W. Shakespeare*. It is necessary for any true appreciation of their full richness to read the score or so of the best *Waverleys* at least six times through in the course of a lifetime, (1) for the story, (2) for the dialogue, (3) for the historical perspective, (4) for the learning, which is great, (5) for the wisdom, which is still greater, (6) for the consummate knowledge of human character, which is greatest of all. And so, in the fulness of time if we persevere, we shall duly arrive at the refutation of the absurd libel that Scott has no message, is no teacher. He teaches by the same methods as Shakespeare—namely, by the representation of human nature in action. Two qualities dominate the rest in any estimate of the magazine of Scott's mind: the marvellous creative energy of his imagination, working upon the raw material of history; and the extraordinary knowledge and sagacity with which this imagination is ballasted. For Scott brings to his work and puts at the disposal of his readers the attributes not only of a learned antiquary, folklorist and ballad-monger, poet and historian, but also those of a sagacious statesman, ecclesiologist, soldier, sportsman, literary critic, topographer, *bon vivant*, genealogist, raconteur, and trained lawyer. He excels in the delineation of warlocks and sibyls, beggars and fishermen, orthographers and pedantic bores of every description, clowns and jesters, staghounds and Dandie Dinmonts. The excellence of the

dramatic talk of what Malvolio would call "the lighter people" in Scott's novels is generally accepted. The broad and genial humour of his low comedy has perhaps only two rivals in the whole range of our literature. His other qualities, as an historical painter, *conteur*, and *improvisatore* of genius have been to a certain extent obscured by irrelevant criticisms. It has been objected, for instance, against his improvisations that Scott's construction is inartistic, his style slovenly, his digressions tedious, his pleasantries mechanical, and his deviation from historical accuracy unpardonable. The liberties which Scott takes with history and chronology, with a view of improving dramatic possibilities, are not particularly happy. Shakespeare (with better excuse) did the same kind of thing, and one can only say of one, as of the other, that no one else has ever drawn such great characters in history with so masterly a hand. Scott's portraits of James I. and Louis XI. are at least worthy to be put side by side with Henry IV., Wolsey, or Philip Augustus. The attempt to make English history alive was such a novel one that Scott no doubt felt as Percy felt in regard to his ballads, that the ingredients must be somewhat mingled and sophisticated to suit the public taste. His was a strenuous attempt to look down the wolf's throat into the dark and remote past. The conversations and speeches of kings and heroes which classic historians and artists have so often attempted, from Thucydides and Livy to Delaroche, Landor and Browning, and so rarely achieved—this most difficult of tasks Sir Walter essayed! With what success, let the reader turn to the interviews of Mary and Lindesay, James I. and Heriot, Richard and Saladin, Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, Elizabeth and Burleigh; let him turn to these and to Scott's delineations of Cromwell, Montrose, the Young Pretender in

¹ It is said that on the last morning of his life consciousness returned. He asked his nurse to help him to the window. He gave one last look on Tweed and said, "To-night I shall know all." He died in the sixty-second year of his age, and was buried in a family sepulchre within the bounds of Dryburgh Abbey, where Lockhart now reposes at his feet. His appearance during the last ten years of his life, in the likeness of a respectable elderly country gentleman, is thus described by a close observer, outside his immediate circle: "Tall, robust, and rather handsome in person, he was deformed by the shortness of his right limb, the foot of which only touched the ground at the toes, while he rocked from side to side on the support of a stout walking cane, which he moved along with the foot and put down at the same time. While living in town he wore a common black suit; in the country he had grey trousers, a short green jacket, and a white hat. His face, generally ruddy with the glow of health, was rendered venerable by the thin grey hair. The countenance and quick grey eye usually had a common-world expression, but of a benevolent kind. All was changed, however, when he told anything serious, or recited a piece of ballad poetry; he then seemed to become a being of a totally different grade and sphere."

youth and decline, Queen Caroline, Claverhouse—and then decide for himself. Many of his minor characters are drawn with a perfection of finish hardly to be found outside Shakespeare, and possibly Dickens; but let us exalt neither this feature, nor the rich humours of his serving-men, gardeners and peasants, his dominies and gaberlunzies, at the expense of the solidity and splendid reality of many of his central figures, or the unrivalled atmosphere, chiaroscuro and colouring of his large historical canvases.

As to the digressions and the ponderous playfulness in many of the introductions, these both represent the defects of admirable qualities; the first, the public interest which Scott arouses in his readers in regard to the politics in the period he is describing, and his avoidance of huddling the incidents as his plots begin to thicken. The uncouth pedantry and technical jargon which he was fond of exhibiting in more or less cumbrous jocularities, especially in the introductions and prefaces attributed to Jedediah Cleishbotham, are similarly the barren and sometimes repulsive underside of Scott's extraordinarily rich, varied, and copious vocabulary. No one perhaps ever had a finer or more effectual control at one and the same time of three distinct vocabularies—the inkhorn terms of the legal and mediæval antiquary, the orthodox English of the critical reviews, and the racy dialect of the

lowland peasantry. Another final objection, which as far as it applies is a much more serious one, is brought against the insipidity of Scott's heroes and heroines. The objection is much reduced in value by the fact that none of Scott's novels were primarily love-stories, that his heroes ordinarily are little more than a partly traditional and partly mechanical link with the object of giving a sentimental unity to the story. No one knew his own limitations better than Scott himself, and he has taken the lead in exaggerating the imbecility of his heroes. There are in fact many exceptions, the Antiquary, the Pirate, and Roland Graeme in *The Abbot*, and notably among his heroines, Di Vernon, Catherine Seyton, Rebecca, and Jeanie Deans. However much his heroes differed in nature from Scott himself, the even balance of their reasons against their sympathies is well conceived, is in itself sufficiently normal, and is an admirable expedient for effecting that which was probably its real use to Scott—"the affording an opportunity for the delineation of all the pros and cons of the case, so that the characters on both sides of the struggle should be properly understood. Scott's imagination was clearly far wider—was far more permeated with the fixed air of sound judgment than his practical impulses. He needed a machinery for displaying his insight into both sides of a public quarrel, and his colourless heroes gave him the instrument he needed."

IN Scott the various lines of eighteenth-century conservatism and nineteenth-century romantic revival most wonderfully converge. His intense feeling for Long Ago made him a romantic almost from his cradle. The master faculties of History and Humour made a strong conservative of him; but his Toryism was of a very different spring from that of Coleridge or Wordsworth. It was not a reaction from disappointment in the sequel of 1789, nor was it the result of reasoned conviction. It was indwelling, rooted deeply in the fibres of the soil, to which Scott's attachment was passionate, and nourished as from a source by ancestral sentiment and "heather" tradition. This sentiment made Scott a victorious pioneer of the Romantic movement all over Europe. At the same time we must remember that with all his fondness for mediævalism, he was fundamentally a thorough eighteenth-century Scotsman and successor of Bailie Nicol Jarvie: a worshipper of good sense, toleration, modern and expert governmental ideas, who valued the past chiefly by way of picturesque relief, and was thoroughly alive to the benefit of peaceful and orderly rule, and deeply convinced that we are much better off as we are than we could have been in the days of King Richard or good Queen Bess. Scott had the mind of an enlightened eighteenth-century administrator and statesman who had made a fierce hobby of armour and old ballads. To expect him to treat of intense passion or romantic mediævalism as Charlotte Brontë or Dante Rossetti would have treated them is as absurd as to expect to find the sentiments of a Mrs. Browning blossoming amidst the horseplay of *Tom Jones* or *Harry Lorrequer*. Scott has few niceties or secrets; he was never subtle, morbid, or fantastic. His handling is ever broad, vigorous, easy, careless, healthy and free. Yet nobly simple and straightforward as man and writer were, there is something very complex about his literary legacy which has gone into all lands and created bigoted enemies (Carlyle, Borrow) as well as unexpected friends (Hazlitt, Newman, Jowett): and we can seldom be sure whether his influence is reactionary or the reverse. There has always been something semi-feudal about it. The "shirra" has a demesne in letters as broad as a countryside, a band of mesne vassals, and a host of minor feudatories and forest retainers attached to the "Abbotsford Hunt."

In one category or another we shall probably be right in including not only Leyden, Hogg, Laidlaw, Allan Cunningham, Motherwell, and Tannahill, but such much larger personalities as Lockhart and

Wilson. As staunch a Tory as Scott himself, the product of a Scottish manse and the oligarchical Oxford of his day (he was a Snell Exhibitioner at Balliol), John Gibson Lockhart was born at Cambusnethan, near Wishaw, on July 14th, 1794. A good-looking "scorpion," he was chief among the caustic wits of Auld Reekie whose genius for mystificatory satire gave *Blackwood's Magazine* its initiatory success of scandal in 1817. In all the venomous pricks and stings of *The Chaldee Manuscript* and *The Cockney School of Poetry* (Hunt, Hood, and Keats), the "scorpion," now aged twenty-three, had "an entire hand, or at least a main finger." Neither his satirical *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, in contradistinction to Scott's *Letters of Paul*, nor his novels, such as *Adam Blair* (1822), and *Reginald Dalton* (1823), are now much read. Better in most respects are the *Ancient Spanish Ballads* (1823), which first established the convention of romantic Spain and awoke the curiosity of Ticknor, Bowring, Hookham Frere, Ormsby, Gibson, and others. Best of all, of course, are the *Lives of Burns* (1828), and Scott (1838), which Carlyle was one of the first to praise and to condemn. In sharpness and acerbity Lockhart could show Hazlitt that advanced Liberals had no monopoly. Like Hazlitt, however, he really excels in praise. He first met Scott in 1818; two years later he married Scott's daughter, and in 1825, largely through Scott's influence, he became editor of *The Quarterly* in succession to the narrow authoritarian and uncompromising reactionary, William Gifford (1757–1826), formerly editor of *The Anti-Jacobin* and author of the mimic Juvenalian invectives of the *Baviad* and the *Mæviad*. It is not, however, a sense of favours received, but a genuine and affectionate reverence for the man and worship for the great writer which finds such apt and eloquent expression in his famous *Life of Sir Walter Scott*, by common consent, after Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, the finest example of British literary biography. After Lockhart's departure for London the tone of *Maga*, as Blackwood's loved to call itself, became somewhat smoother. From 1822 it had found a safety-valve in the once celebrated *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. The fabricator in chief of these elephantine diversions was the son of a wealthy manufacturer of Paisley. Born in 1785, John Wilson went to Oxford and became a rich disciple of the Lake School of Poetry. His own verse, as well as his fiction, was gracefully mediocre, but his money made him a seigneur among the Grasmere poets. In 1815 he lost his money and went to Edinburgh with a wife and family to provide for. Lockhart was by this time his *alter ego*, and the "Scott influence" helped him to get a professorship and a post among the "miscreants" on the staff of *Maga*. After 1825 *Blackwood* became more and more an embodiment of Wilson's personality. His multifarious pursuits reflected themselves without reserve in the *Magazine*. "Criticism, biography, tales of Scottish life poured in only too exuberant profusion from his pen. Poetry, sport, and revelry were the three fountains of inexhaustible inspiration, and it was from an intimate blending of the most vivid joys of all three that his more original and lasting work proceeded. Tavern meetings with good cheer and good society, long tramps among the heathery glens, glorious guffawings—such were the elements which, flung across the rich refracting medium of his imagination, evolved those unique compounds of poetry, wit, humour, drama, high spirits, and balderdash—the *Noctes Ambrosianæ*," in which Wilson appears as "Christopher North," and Hogg, by an unexpected apotheosis, as "The Shepherd." The gulf between these exuberances and ordinary temperamental journalism is felt to be far less immeasurable now than it appears to have seemed seventy years back. "Crusty Christopher," as Tennyson called Wilson, died at Edinburgh on April 3rd, 1854, *æt.* 69.

Sir Walter Scott has had no lack of biographers and critics, but it may be doubted whether he has receded sufficiently into the past to obtain a full or adequate appreciation. Modern critics, such as Bagehot, Stephen, Raleigh, and Ker, have been in the main less generous, and, as it seems to us, less just than Hazlitt or even Nassau Senior. Lockhart's mammoth *Life* * of 1838 (second edition in 10 vols., 1839) has had a considerable progeny, but most of these are dwarfs, and none of them are in any sense rivals. Among the best are those by James Hogg, R. P. Gillies, Robert Chambers, W. H. Hutton, W. H. Hudson, Prof. Saintsbury, G. Le G. Norgate, and Andrew Lang (1906). More valuable are the supplementary *Journal* from 1825–1832, published in 1890, and the *Familiar Letters* (1894): while to those interested in Scott criticism *Le Roman Historique* (1890) of L. Maigron and the anonymous *Chapters on the Waverley Novels* (1898) are both deserving of attention. After the author's own final edition in 48 vols., with its charming vignettes (reprinted in facsimile by Messrs. Constable), the Abbotsford, Centenary, Dryburgh, and Border editions are, perhaps, among the most desirable. The text of the novels as a whole and the large question of Scott's European influence still require to be worked at.

CHAPTER V

LORD BYRON

“The Grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.”—*Don Juan*, Canto xi. 55.

“When Byron’s eyes were shut in death,
We bowed our head, and held our breath.
He taught us little, but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder’s roll.”—M. ARNOLD.

Ancestry—Newstead—Harrow—Cambridge—Vocation—The *Levant*—*Childe Harold*—Marriage—Leman—Byron and Shelley—The Guiccioli—*Don Juan*—Ravenna—Pisa—Missolonghi—Byromania—Its Justification.

BYRON’S mother, Catherine Gordon (1765—1811) of Gight, was descended from Sir William Gordon, the grandson of James I. of Scotland. She was early left an orphan with a dot of £23,500, and on May 13th, 1785, at St. Michael’s, Bath, she married Captain John Byron, a handsome but profligate ex-officer in the Guards, son of a noted old salt, “the honourable John,” better known as Foul-Weather Jack Byron (1723—1786), author of an engrossing narrative of shipwreck, peril and starvation off Patagonia and Chili, published in 1768.

Byron’s father, as he himself tells us, was anything but Cœlebs in search of a wife. Mad or handsome “Jack Byron,” as he was called, ran away with a marchioness at twenty-three, and the money that he extracted from divers heiresses and ran through would probably not fall far short of six figures. The poet took after him in appearance rather than his mother, who was fat long before she was forty, and was never very fair, though very vain. George Gordon, afterwards sixth Lord Byron, was born to this ill-assorted couple in Holles Street, London, on January 22nd, 1788. His father left them soon afterwards (he died at Valenciennes in 1791), and the child was left to the sole charge of his mother, one of the most injudicious parents that ever was. In 1794 by the death of a cousin he became heir to his great-uncle (elder brother of Admiral Byron), known as “the wicked Lord Byron.” In 1798 this fifth lord died, and the future poet suc-

ceeded to the title, the seat of Newstead Abbey, and the family estates, worth about £1,400 a year. The boy and his mother now left Aberdeen, where they had lived very thriftily, for the ruinous “Abbey” of Newstead. Byron had already shown some precocity, with a retentive memory and a strong ambition to excel more particularly in sports, from which he was largely debarred, owing to mis-shapen feet that prevented him from running, or even walking at anything better than a painful hobble. He went to a school at Dulwich, where he devoured Eastern legends, following up the Old Testament with *The Arabian Nights*, Knolles, Rycaut, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and perusing with ardour *Don Quixote* and *Roderick Random*; but no poetry, which he hated. At Harrow he eventually became a leader among the boys, and was liked, though dreaded, by the Master, Drury. He stayed away from school one whole term (Michaelmas, 1803, *at*. 15) without explanation, in consequence of an “overpowering passion” for a distant cousin, Mary Anne Chaworth. In October, 1805, he entered Trinity, Cambridge (because there were no nobleman’s rooms vacant at Christ Church), as a nobleman, and anticipated Buckland by sharing his commons with a bear, and introducing him to the dons in academical attire. The leading achievement of his Cambridge residence (apart from £10,000 worth of debts) was the formation of a quadruple alliance between Byron, John Cam Hobhouse, Scrope Davies, and Charles Skinner Matthews.

As in the case of so many precocious and vain young nobles (as in Shelley's case too), his thoughts turned very readily to the printing of his immature love poems. Most sentimental young men with a spark of literary ambition would probably do the same if they had the necessary cash at their disposal. A revised selection of these fugitive pieces was published in June, 1807, as *Hours of Idleness*. A review in *The Edinburgh* for January, 1808 (probably by Brougham with some touches by Jeffrey), cudgelled the author for his childish vanity and snobbery in parading his youth and his title. The poems themselves were treated as beneath contempt (and many of them were). This review determined Byron's vocation; it made him resolve to excel in poetry. When Byron first read the review, he felt very unwell and went for solace to the bottle, emptying three bottles of claret without sensible relief. He turned for a remedy to rhyme, and was astonished at the rapidity of his cure. After the first twenty lines he already felt better. His retort appeared in March under the title of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. This brilliant revenge upon his reviewers makes a dramatic commencement to his poetical career.

In June, 1809, he sailed from Falmouth for Lisbon and the Levant, impelled by the same impulse which carried Southey, Lamartine, Lane, Lady Hester Stanhope, and so many of the romantics of that generation in the same direction. He posed a good deal *en route* by way of Gibraltar, Malta, Athens, Smyrna, Abydos, Constantinople, and the Morea. He returned to London after two years' absence with the materials for the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. He had returned to encounter serious debts and bereavements. "I suppose it will end in my marrying a Golden Dolly," he wrote, "or blowing my brains out." His mother, the *mater furiosa* against whom he had so many causes of complaint, died six weeks after his return. *Childe Harold* was published in March, 1812, and Byron found himself the idol of smart and sentimental society. Bright-eyed dames and all lovers of notoriety and *belles lettres* rallied round this naughty, handsome, and fascinating rebel. Various avatars of *Childe Harold* (*The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, 1813-14) repeated and continued its astonishing success with the reading public—though the poet made many enemies by avowing as his some contemptuous lines on the

Prince Regent, which the Tory papers of the day took to mark the very acme of bad taste.

For all this, however, Byron continued the fashion. As in the case of Napoleon, his ostentatious and over-acted contempt for women (he professed that it gave him nausea to see them eat) made him the idol of the sex. He had the reputation of being a great rake and was a great dandy, and in spite of all precautions and premonitions he was, on January 2nd, 1815, married to a Miss Milbanke, who had formed the intention of reforming his character. This character, before it acquired the habitual sardonic tinge of his later years, was by no means deficient in noble impulses, but capricious, irresolute, moody, and vain. Great wit, devotion, or cleverness might have subjugated the Turk in Byron. Miss Milbanke was merely an ordinary, rather frigid cultivated beauty, and her fortune was quite inadequate. She had some absurd *à priori* theories derived from Madame de Staël as to the management of men, and when these were turned inside out she lost her head and allowed herself to be guided by her relatives, who had no reforming instinct and viewed Byron's dissipations with a holy horror. The communication of the wild symptoms and excesses of the reprobate to these relatives was a circumstance of evil augury for the success of his treatment and cure. Grounds of dispute were aggravated by accumulating pecuniary difficulties. A daughter, Ada, was born in December, 1815. Next month, at the instance probably of her family and lawyers, Lady Byron was suggesting evidence to prove her husband's insanity, and a few days later, after some hysterics, she decided never to see him again. In the meantime he had made many enemies. Tory politicians and Whig (Edinburgh) reviewers alike hated him, and *la haute société*, though far from nice in such matters, drew the line at the (quite erroneous) reputation of a universal seducer. Byron's former popularity was suddenly and inexplicably converted into a general shudder of indignation. He was hissed as he went to the House of Lords, insulted in the streets, advised not to go near Drury Lane (of which he was a manager), accused of every monstrous vice, and compared to Nero, Caligula, Heliogabalus, Henry VIII., Beelzebub—nay, the Father of Evil himself. Lady Byron, on the other hand, was regarded as a suffering angel.

At the end of February, 1816, Byron pub-

lished *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*; and on April 26th following he set sail for Ostend with a hatred of England in his heart and a determination never to return to it again. He went up the Rhine, and settled at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva. There he wrote the superb third canto of *Childe Harold*, containing the famous description of the Waterloo Ball ("There was a sound of revelry by night"), and the invocation to Clarens, Rousseau, and Love. At Ouchy, on the lake, he was shown over Chillon by a drunken corporal, and wrote that famous piece on the château and its prisoner in octosyllabics of a fatal felicity. In this neighbourhood, too, he renewed the acquaintance of the Shelleys which he had made at Great Marlow. With the poet and Mary Godwin was also Jane Clairmont, the daughter of Mary's stepmother by her first husband. By her Byron had a daughter, Allegra, to whom he was greatly attached. The deep feeling stirred by their separation was the occasion of two of his most imaginative poems, *The Dream* and *Darkness*. The unseemly curiosity manifested in his doings at Diodati gave Byron a permanent horror of the travelling English. The next three winters were spent at Venice, in an ostentatious defiance of the decrees of conventional morality. Here, however, he wrote the fourth and finest canto of *Childe Harold*, commencing:

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand.

Shelley (or, as "Birron" called him, Shiloh, or "the Snake") was in more senses than one the hero of Byron's life abroad. He dragged him out of the Slough of Despond at Geneva, and out of a slough of sensuality at Venice. He diverted him at Ravenna and Pisa; criticised his poems frankly for him, with the unselfishness and sincerity peculiar to Shelley in all his artistic admirations and attachments; and finally impregnated Byron's muse with Wordsworth, Hellenism, Goethe, and with his own profound feeling for nature, philosophy, and the diviner art of poetry. Moore and Murray tried to induce their nobleman to throw off that "atheist" and his set, but Byron steadfastly refused. He had enough sense to see that he was enormously the gainer in this intercourse. And more than this, Byron revered "the Snake," as far as it was in him to reverence

anybody. He paid him the greatest compliments in his power. Shelley, he said, had more poetry in him at seventeen than Chatterton, and much more than any man living. He had an implicit belief in his understanding. He said he was the single man he had known under thirty companionable to an older man, and one of the few authors to whom (after he had once praised their last publication) he could always find something to say. He borrowed money of him without restraint, and said repeatedly that he was the best and most benevolent of men, and "what's more, a perfect gentleman." Byron felt Shelley's death profoundly in 1822, though he did his best not to show it. In the meantime Byron had left Venice, where he wrote *Mazeppa* and began an experiment with *Beppo* (October, 1817)—a kind of satirical medley suggested by Frere's *Whistlecraft*, which proved so successful that he there and then began *Don Juan*, in the same vein and metre (*ottava rima*, as opposed to the Spenserian stanza of the *Childe*). He had at length found a poetic medium for his gay or sardonic banter, for his amazing power of witty allusion or reminiscence. In these qualities, combined with an almost unrivalled gift of eloquence and a quickness at rhyming that verged upon improvisation, his true strength lay. Byron had not the apparatus necessary for deep and sustained thought, nor had he the power in musical and harmonious verse of "communicating intense and impassioned impressions of man and nature" (which Shelley defined as the true poet's function); but no man, perhaps, ever had a more rapid or unflagging wit for glancing reflections upon men and things. In *Don Juan* his verse most nearly approximates to the sparkling fanfarronade and ironic posing of his talk, which, if quite untrustworthy as a guide to his real character and opinions, was in the highest degree vivacious, "pittresque," and amusing. The first four cantos of *Don Juan* were written between September, 1818, and November, 1819. At this point its further progress was arrested by the intervention of a new personal influence. During the autumn of 1819 he first met the young Countess Teresa Guiccioli, the blonde and fair-haired girl-wife of an Italian nobleman of sixty. In the following April they were formally introduced, and their attachment developed into his forming an intimacy with her as *cavalier*

servante, somewhat bewildering to English ideas, though sanctioned by Venetian usage. In May he visited her at Ravenna, writing on his way thither the *Stanzas to the Po*; and at the close of 1819 he quitted Venice and settled at Ravenna, in the Guiccioli Palace. Shelley visited him there, and testifies in the strongest manner to the regenerating influence exercised upon the poet by this new *liaison*. At Ravenna during 1820-21 he was at the height of his powers, and there, apart from his experiment in *terza rima* called *The Prophecy of Dante*, and the continuation of *Don Juan*, he wrote practically all the dramas that came in succession to the romantic *Manfred* (of 1817), conceived and moulded under the influence of the sublime impressions he had received from his first close contact with Shelley, Goethe, and the summits of the Oberland. These later dramas were *Marino Faliero* (1820), *Sardanapalus* (1821), *The Two Foscari* (1821), *Heaven and Earth* (1821), and the finest in this kind, *Cain* (1820). Scott went to the length of saying that "B" had matched Milton on his own ground—a truly preposterous judgment. At Ravenna, too, he wrote, and later determined to publish, the withering stanzas (in his now favourite *ottava rima*) of his burlesque *Vision of Judgment*, a counterblast to the "servility" of Southey's elegiac ode on George III. and to certain insults which he had received from the Laureate. Byron, like so many men of genius, not only worshipped himself with a ritual solemnity and minimised or ignored everything that did not immediately concern his *ego*, but also fretted and fumed and turned livid upon the least critical check or opposition. Murray, "the most timid of God's publishers," naturally refused to publish *The Vision*, the scurrility of which is only excelled by the stab and barb of its wit. He designed, therefore, that it should appear in *The Liberal*, a revolutionary organ which he proposed to launch with the aid of Shelley as an inspirer, and Leigh Hunt (imported for the purpose) as drudge. In

November, 1821, Byron's discovered complicity in the premature and ill-contrived conspiracies of the Carbonari led to his hurried migration from Ravenna to Pisa, where he found a small group of sympathetic spirits and admirers in the Shelleys, Medwin, Taaffe, Edward Ellerker Williams and his wife, and E. J. Trelawny. His life there in the Palazzo Lanfranchi, on the Lung' Arno, soon settled down into the cast-iron routine which had become indispensable to his enormous rate of production in verse and prose (mainly letters and journalising).¹

At Pisa he finished *Werner*, a mediocre play, begun in 1815 under the stimulus of one of the now forgotten *Canterbury Tales* of Harriet Lee, and went on with *Don Juan*. Here he caught the infection of boating from Shelley and Williams, and commissioned a small schooner, the *Bolívar*. He was much shaken by the deaths of his daughter Allegra and of Shelley (at whose cremation he was present) during this year; and in September he moved with his menagerie of retainers—dogs, monkeys, and peacocks—to Genoa. He was to achieve nothing further of any great note in literature, and at thirty-four talked of his vocation to letters being ended. His failure with the Carbonari and with *The Liberal* (the collapse of which coincided with one of Byron's recurring fits of penuriousness, though he now enjoyed a good income, and so caused the gravest inconvenience to Leigh Hunt, who had come out to edit it without much thought for the morrow, and had brought his *family* with him—to Byron's horrified amazement) had somewhat injured his self-esteem. But he still hoped to prove himself a man of action. He sought relief from a painful mental crisis by accepting an invitation to join the committee of English sympathisers with the Greek revolt of 1821. He volunteered to serve in the field, and on July 14th, 1823, sailed with Trelawny for Cephalonia. He can have had very little confidence in the success of the enterprise, and plunged into it largely, perhaps, in the

¹ Rising about noon he dawdled, talked and played billiards during the afternoon, subsisting on strong green tea, soda-water and biscuits, and chewing tobacco or opium to allay his hunger, which he dared not satisfy for fear of becoming fat (he was very prone to obesity and was debarred from active exercise by his lameness), he drove out about three and, outside the town, mounted on horseback. He rode then, chatting gaily, or, if alone, racking his brain for fitting matter and rhymes for his coming poem, to a small farm, where he practised pistol shooting for half an hour. He dined frugally at seven, drank sparingly of gin and water, spent two hours with La Guiccioli, and on his return home sat reading or composing by the midnight lamp to two or three in the morning.



From the Drawing by G. H. Harlow

Lord Byron

spirit of a man who devotes himself to the infernal gods, covers up his head, rushes into the thick of the havoc, and leaves his life a sacrifice. He talked wildly of cowardice, but showed firmness and courage. Trelawny, who could hardly resist a sneer at Byron, said that if he had once drawn the sword he would have thrown away the scabbard. But it was not to be. Before anything definite could be done to remedy the chronic lack of unity and cash, Byron was down with malarial fever at Missolonghi, and, weakened as his constitution was by his habit of semi-starvation, he died there on April 19th, 1824. His remains (refused by Westminster) were buried at Hucknall Torkard, near Newstead.

Byron, who had dreaded the sting of death, probably welcomed the release of it. The temptation to play to the foibles of the English public had proved too strong for him, and he was always manœuvring to get into the limelight, in spite of which his external life was in reality humdrum enough. It was the internal life of the man that was stormy, owing mainly perhaps to the conflict between a native generosity and noble impulses, and infirmities of temper, mainly a diseased egotism and vanity, aggravated by his physical deformity and the knock-down blow of his wife's repudiation of him. If he had lived, his progress might have been like that of Scott, from poetry to prose. As he himself said, he had written enough for women and children; it was time that he wrote something for grown men. Judging by his letters, and the vast superiority of his English prose to that of his contemporaries almost without exception, it is probable enough that, had he devoted himself to imaginative work in this medium, he would have accomplished greater marvels even than *Childe Harold* or *Don Juan*.¹

Byron has not the sensitive and cultivated

artistic sense of a Keats, a Tennyson, or a Rossetti. Nor has he the gift for poetical form and phrasing of Shelley or Coleridge. "He manages his pen," wrote Scott (with apparently unconscious irony), "with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality. In the mere art of poetry he stands below the 'Cockneys' whom he so bitterly despised, and this defect will prevent him being placed as a poet [next] after Shakespeare and Milton." But it is easy to exaggerate Byron's defects of form and of art. The positive merits of his poetical method have never been sufficiently recognised, partly perhaps because his method is so different from that of other poets of our age. The compensating qualities of his style are simple and generally obvious, and they are not subtle. But his style generally suits his genius, and at its best gives an effect of reality and sincerity which carries everything before it. When we feel that the *estro*, to which he laid claim, is really upon him, then a current of elemental power is felt to be sweeping through his verse; we forget the "Byronism" of the man, and are occupied only with the energy of his passion and the lyrical resonance of his utterance.

In spite of his critical championship of Pope, Byron's poetic practice and methods much more nearly approximated that of the Romantic poets of his own day. As for poesy he says: "Mine is the dream of the sleeping passions; when they are awake I cannot speak their language." This is not far removed from Wordsworth's theory of poetry taking its origin in emotion recollected in tranquillity. "Poetry," say Wordsworth, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." "For what is poesy?" echoes Byron, "but to create from overflowing good or ill." The original emotion is the affair of an instant; the repetition may to a certain extent be arranged, cultivated, and prolonged, but it must essentially be spon-

¹ The very wildness and remoteness of Byron's poetry (like the pathos of Hood's) adapted it, in a special manner, to the needs of the sedentary toilers, the slum bound, the *revoltés* of great cities. "It is all very well for the happy and well-to-do to talk scornfully of poetic sentimentality. Those to whom a natural outlet for their affection is denied know better. They instinctively turn to books which are the farthest removed from commonplace and are in a sense unreal. Not to the prosperous man or dweller in beautiful scenery, well married to an intelligent wife, is Byron precious, but to the poor wretch, say some city clerk with an aspiration beyond his desk, who before he knew what he was doing made a marriage—well—which was a mistake." Such a one will find in a poem like *The Corsair* the lofty style, the scorn of what is mean and base, the daring, the love of freedom and the illimitable, the pent-up passion, and then over all the cadence like the rhythmic beat of waves on the shore—the very needs of his inmost soul. To the imaginative and historic more than æsthetically poetic mind Byron, too, makes an especial appeal and is the most readable of poets. And for the Byromania which affords such relief to circumscribed lives, see Mark Rutherford's *Revolution in Tanner's Lane* (1887).

taneous. That the faculty existed as strong in Byron as in Wordsworth is hardly to be denied. The use which the two poets made of it could scarcely be more dissimilar. Wordsworth sought to represent an emotion calm and profound, Byron to create one, instinct with vivacity and passion.

Byron's style is correspondingly marked with careless energy and rapidity of passion—varying continually from a certain incoherence and vulgarity to an almost incredible richness and ease. It has the vices of impromptu work, for Byron steadily refused to polish, to file or to

furbish: the damning, inevitable signs of a man born to wear a golden tassel. "I am like the tiger; if I miss the first spring I go growling back to my jungle. There is no second. I can't correct and I won't." Hence a loose and random style of workmanship very deficient in subtlety but often of incomparable ease, freshness and vigour. Hence it is too that Byron must not be read for fine phrases, honeyed cadences or curious felicities of expression, but for the directness of some cry, the sweeping magnificence of some exalted strophe; above all, for the breadth and effectiveness of its masses and ensembles.

As Lockhart to Scott, so Moore stands to Byron,—a kind of literary and biographical chauffeur. Whereas Lockhart, however, has generally risen in estimation, Moore has undoubtedly declined until he is at the present unduly depreciated. "The first lyrist since Shakespeare," whose "songs are worth all the epics ever composed," "Ierne's Minstrel Boy," the rival of Burns or Béranger, such are the terms in which Earl Russell rated him. Now, alas! he is spoken of as fifth-rate; we hear of the *fadéur* of his sentiment, the dulcification of his rhythm, the insipidity of his phrasing, and even his eulogists have much ado to claim for him one single line of veritable poetry. Even if the worst be granted, Moore is an agreeable figure, quite prominent in the literary history of his time, a brilliant example of social achievement—of a somewhat parasitic order, no doubt, as a large proportion of literary success is bound to be; but, with it all, Moore was no sycophant. A grocer on both sides by descent, he was destined by his talents to climb the social ladder as even more brilliant wits have done before and since, but no one, probably, with more conspicuous success, unless it be Charles Dickens. Thomas Moore was born at Aungier Street, Dublin, on May 28th, 1779. A clever, petted, precocious, prize-winning, imitative boy, after "a boudoir education" Tom entered Trinity College. Being a Catholic he mixed in pretty well what society he pleased, and his presence came to be coveted at all musical or theatrical parties. Hibernian fluency, a slender skill in music, and a strong propensity from tender years to warble songs of his own composition more than compensated for his insignificant appearance, or the antecedents of the shop. When he crossed the St. George's Channel with a sheaf of his own songs, and a version of *Anacreon* (which he forthwith issued in quarto!) London could resist him no more than Dublin. It was certainly no Anacreontic property in Moore that achieved this open sesame to the houses of the great. Nothing could be less genuine or more cloying than these sweetmeat *Odes*. Now it is a bowl, and now it is a goblet. Now we drink, and now we quaff. Now it is a bud, and now it is a blossom, now a garland, now a cluster, now ringlets and now tresses. But it is always wine and flowerets and white necks, until we are positively surfeited with such decorations. Such playthings of renaissance were created with infinitely greater zest and charm by Jonson, Carew, and Herrick. But Moore knew better how to market such wares, for he dedicated them to the Regent. Henceforth, with his melodious gifts and musical manner his social fortune was made. His "fierceness" as a duellist, when his erotic *Poems* were challenged by *The Edinburgh* in 1807, won him further renown, besides the acquaintanceship of Byron. The publication of his *Irish Melodies* in successive numbers commencing in this year placed society definitely at his feet. From all this he retired a few years later upon his marriage to a pretty little actress (Bessie Dyke), and a more devoted couple thenceforth never was seen. In his seclusion at Mayfield, near Ashbourne, he wrote a few more songs, such as "Those Evening Bells"; but the great production of these years was the set poem of *Lalla Rookh* (1817). Longman commissioned him to write poetry at large just as Constable had commissioned Scott (Rokeby = £3,000), and this was the result, a succession of *menus plaisirs*, perhaps, but a considerable feat for all that, the more so inasmuch as Byron's *Giaour* and *Corsair* had come out in the interval. Far from resenting this success Byron took Moore into his confidence, and he became Byron's chief correspondent in London. "Tommy dearly loves a lord," said Byron, who seems nevertheless to have become sincerely attached to one in whom feelings of awe for so formidable an ally must have considerably predominated over those of affection. Yet "Damn it, Tom, don't be poetical," was the only serious reproach Moore incurred until Byron's death in 1824. He then, after elaborate negotiation with Murray, consented to become Byron's official biographer. The *Life of Byron* appeared in 1830—another literary feat of a high order—which will long enjoy a foremost place in the class to which it belongs. To the other side of the account must be placed Moore's puzzling and puzzling-headed but surely unjustifiable decision to destroy the autobiographical *Memoirs* with which Byron had entrusted him. Moore's closing years were unhappily clouded by the distresses ensuing from the defalcation of a deputy in the Bermudas, and by domestic losses which not only darkened, but finally obscured "one of the most sparkling intellects that ever shone upon the world." His memory, which had sustained some of the most brilliant talk of the day, gave out completely in 1849, and three years later, on February 25th, 1852, Thomas Moore died at Bromham, near Devizes. An apotheosis seemed reached when he secured a lord as a biographer; but in the sequel nothing has proved more unfortunate to his memory, for no more slovenly piece of work than Earl Russell's *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*

disfigured the literature of the nineteenth century. The kindly and affectionate traits of Moore's character and the charm of his manner and easy, fluent talk are completely obscured in this morass. Moore's satires *The Twopenny Post-Bag* and *The Fudge Family Abroad* were by their nature ephemeral. An age that has fed upon Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, and Arnold cannot profess to be deeply moved by his poetry. Yet it is probably true that our literature could better spare a better man than Tom Moore. As set to music his songs are tuneful, pretty, softly sentimental in tone and expression, in rhythm and metre both fluent and extremely varied. As poetic compositions some of them are scarcely above the level of "Gaily the Troubadour" or "Oh, no, we never mention her" of the egregious "Butterfly Bayly." Yet by many people who can supply the requisite glamour of youth and inexperience, and who remember that the songs were never intended to be separated from music and mandolines, Moore's ditties (such as "The Minstrel Boy," "The Harp that Once," "There's nothing half so sweet in life," "Oft in the stilly night," "She is far from the land," the Canadian Boat Song, "'Tis the last rose of summer"), are still adorable. The volume of his poems, though inferior decidedly to Campbell's in strict poetic work, would be far more missed, and thousands who have never heard of Campbell are ready to-day to echo the sentiment:

My boat is on the shore
And my bark is on the sea;
But, before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

The best books on the Wordsworth-Coleridge and Byron groups may, to a certain extent, be combined. Such works as C. H. Herford's admirable *Age of Wordsworth*, the introductory matter to the third volume of Chambers's *Cyclopædia of English Literature*, Stopford Brooke's *Theology in English Poets*, A. W. Benn's *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*, H. Beers's *History of Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century*, and Cestre's *Revolution Française et les poètes Anglais* would form the most natural groundwork. Then there are the various editions of the *Lyrical Ballads* by Dowden, Hutchinson, and Sampson; and the anecdotal work concerning the early "Lakists" by Joseph Cottle (*Early Recollections*, 1837), De Quincey, Lamb, Barry Cornwall, the Cowden Clarkes, Leigh Hunt (*Autobiography*, ed. Ingpen), Crabb Robinson. Among the editions of Wordsworth are those of Moxon, Dowden, John Morley, William Knight (the most elaborate), 1897, and the well-known *Selections* with Matthew Arnold's Introduction. Among the endless critics and biographers are also to be found Hazlitt, Emerson, R. H. Horne, D. M. Moir, Shairp, Bagehot, F. Myers, Pater, Swinburne, Legouis (*La Jeunesse de Wordsworth*), Nowell, C. Smith (*Wordsworth's Literary Criticism*), Masson, Magnus (*Wordsworth Primer*), Tutin (*Bibliography*), Hutchinson (text of early *Poems*), Minto, Stephen, Lowell, and Prof. Raleigh (Wordsworth, 1902*). There is an authoritative *Life of Coleridge*, by J. Dyke Campbell (1893), and valuable monographs and introductions by Stopford Brooke, Dr. Garnett, E. H. Coleridge, Hall Caine, and Traill. Brandl's *Coleridge and the English Romantic School* (1887), Cestre, Chevrillon, Dowden, and J. L. Haney's *German Influence on Coleridge* are also useful, while among the critics should be noted especially J. M. Robertson (*New Essays towards a Critical Method**), Stephen, Mill (*Dissertations*), Benn, Beers, and Swinburne's Essay on *Christabel*. Byron pointed out Scott's great debt to this, remarking, "Set a thief to catch a thief." De Quincey's detective work on Coleridge's quarryings among German classics was much resented by the disciples of the Archangel. The bibliography of Byron is a subject to itself. Not since the days of the Bozzies and Piozzis had there been so great a prey for the penny-a-liner. After the standard *Life* by Moore we have the delightful *Conversations* by Th. Medwin and the racy *Records* of E. J. Trelawny (1858), later *Lives or recollections* by J. C. Jeaffreson, John Galt, K. Elze, Rabbe (*Les Maîtresses Authentiques*), Guiccioli, Hunt, Hobhouse, Nichol, Dallas, Parry (*Last Days*), Dallois, Brandes, L. Lewes, and F. H. Pughe (1902). The standard editions of the Poetry and Prose are those edited by E. H. Coleridge and R. E. Prothero (7 vols. and 6 vols., 1898—1904), with fine portraits.

CHAPTER VI

JANE AUSTEN, SOME LADY NOVELISTS HER CONTEMPORARIES, AND OTHERS

"Satire is the element in which Jane Austen lives. It would be difficult to name an English author, except perhaps Swift, whose works are more intimately pervaded with the spirit of satire. Their methods and scope are of course utterly different; there is not a trace of the savage indignation of Swift to be found in all her writing. And yet her power, wielded by a less gentle and submissive temper, would have furnished a very efficient light-armed auxiliary to the war engaged in by Gulliver. She has the true fighter's instinct for the weak point in the adversary's armour although she exhibits it only in the tourney of a summer's day. It is amusement, not victory, that she seeks, and her feats are like that feat of Saladin in *The Talisman*, who although he could not cleave an iron mace asunder with a broadsword, could cut a veil of gossamer as it floated in the air."—PROF. RALEIGH.

Jane Austen—Life—Atmosphere—Comparisons and Corrections—Maria Edgeworth—Susan Ferrier—Galt and the *Blackwood* group.

JANE AUSTEN was born on December 16th, 1775, at the pretty little country parsonage of Steventon, Hants, where she passed the first twenty-six years of her life and wrote her first three books.¹ Her father, George Austen, was a typical Oxford divine of that period, of good-looking exterior and address, an admirable diner out, with a respectable fund of Latin, and a double portion of worldly prudence. Her mother, great-niece of a former Master of Balliol, was distinguished by lively common sense. There were five brothers and two sisters, Cassandra and Jane. There was an aroma of sound literature about the rectory, and a good deal of Richardson, Johnson, Cowper, and Fanny Burney was read aloud. The sisters were sent to a "real, honest, old-fashioned boarding-school, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price." In 1801 the rector gave up his light parochial duties at Steventon to his son, and the family were settled at Bath (where the fragment of *The Watsons* was sketched) until his death in February, 1805. The widow and her daughters then remained for a time at Southampton, but in 1809 settled into a "second home" at Chawton, near Winchester.

There between 1811 and 1816 Jane's last three books were written.² In May, 1817, ill-health rendered it desirable that she should be nearer the surgeon in whom the family had faith; she was moved accordingly to a quiet lane in the city of Winchester, between the close and the college. There she died on July 18th, 1817, her forty-two years of placid existence having, save for a love disappointment, about which she said little, been darkened by no sore trials and undisturbed by any save the gentler emotions. During the last stages of her consumption she told her nurses that she wanted nothing but death. She was buried in Winchester Cathedral, where a stained window commemorates her fame.

We know enough to get a very fair picture of the social and mental atmosphere in which Jane Austen lived, moved, wrote, and had her being—the thoroughly unspiritual atmosphere of a comfortable country rectory, where the nearest approach to religion was a discussion as to whether it was wicked to travel on Sundays, or to take part in private theatricals, and where the text "Whatever is, is right," was sedulously preached to slumbrous ears by a curate. A firm line was drawn between the outer world and the family, the sentiment

¹ *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Northanger Abbey* (written 1796-9).

² *Emma*, *Mansfield Park*, *Persuasion* (written between February, 1811, and August, 1816).



Jane Austen

of which was healthy, and the affections of the strongest; indigence and luxury alike unknown, imprudent marriage the one unpardonable sin, "elegance" a cardinal virtue, vulgarity sternly ostracised (witness Mrs. Elton and the Thorpes), dissent and every kind of stupidity and squalor successfully ignored.

Her field of observation was small, a network of a few parishes, eight or nine family circles perhaps, all told, a range only temporarily enlarged before 1801 by an occasional visit to Bath. But within that narrow circle how marvellously competent she is! Of her impeccability as an observer we can get some idea from her face—extremely kind and intelligent, yes, but just a little feline with decidedly dancing and mischievous if not positively saucy eyes. She certainly did not travel very far for the types of her first three novels, in two of which (*Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*) it is probable that the heroine is a more or less idealised Jane. Her lady friends were mercifully unsuspicious of the fact that she was taking them in with those naughty eyes of hers; but her talents were never recognised locally at all—she was "the lively Miss Jane, from the rectory, you know," to all her acquaintance: her first book, we must remember, was not published until 1811.¹

Moreover, she carefully mixed the colours on her palette. That she used a very fine brush is obvious, but of her studio secrets we know practically nothing. We can imagine her, however, writing with Cowper, "To touch and retouch is the secret of almost all good writing." As with little poetry, so with little prose: it should be, like little men, nervous, masculine, and compact.

In her own department (which we must recognise to be a small one of still, but real, life, not, however, perfectly actual, because the normal activity of human beings is virtually excluded, and all the characters are parasitical

beings subsisting upon the labour of others in a kind of cloistered and subdued lotus-land free from the gusts of hunger and passion), she is as an artist, so far as we know, unrivalled, for she recognised her own limits to perfection—except to some extent, perhaps, in *Mansfield Park*, which is unquestionably her dullest performance—and practically never went a hair's breadth beyond them.² She was, too, an admirable critic, neither diffident nor complacent, wrote to please herself and tore up what she considered to be below her best. She never inflates herself or anything she has to say; nor was she ever in the least danger of over-writing herself. She creates for us just as many neighbourhoods (pre-eminently three, in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, and *Persuasion*) as we can conveniently master without confusion; her picture-gallery of heroes and heroines is delightfully varied without being in the least overcrowded. The content of her work is adequate without being excessive. We are interested in every part of it and preserve an amused interest in every one of her chief characters as a welcome addition to our burden of literary consciousness. No writer has been more fortunate in the extent of his or her output. After the extravagance of Mrs. Radcliffe,³ and the mystery and terror school, the braggadocio of Fielding and Smollett, the mawkishness of the Inchbalds and Opies, nay even the "Big Bow-wow" of Sir Walter himself, the ivory miniature work of Jane Austen with its lambent satire and formal yet felicitous phrasing—the gay, lucid and lady-bird style of *Emma* and *Persuasion*—brings instant relief. Miss Austen represents femininity in fiction as no other English authoress does.

Charlotte Brontë remarked that Jane Austen had not so much even as a speaking acquaintance with the stormy sisterhood of the passions: it is true. Charlotte Brontë is our other great representative of femininity in fiction, but she

¹ *Sense and Sensibility* was rewritten from an early draft called *Eleanor and Marianne* in 1797, sold for £150, and published 1811. *Pride and Prejudice* (after refusals) issued 1813; *Mansfield Park*, 1814; *Emma*, 1816; *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* posthumously in 1818.

² "The world of pathos and passion is present in her work by implication; her delicious, quiet mirth, so quiet as to be inaudible to gross ears, is stirred by the incongruity between the realities of the world as she conceives them, and these realities as they are conceived by her puppets. . . . Sympathy with her characters she frequently has, but identity, never. . . . She stands for ever aloof. . . . But the folly of some of her characters implies the existence of wisdom; the selfishness and pettiness of others involve the ideas of disinterestedness and magnanimity, just as a picture painted in cold tints would lose its meaning if there were no blue and red in the scheme of the universe. To ask for all colours, always, within the limits of the frame, is absurd" (Raleigh, *English Novel*). Lady Bertram, Mrs. Norris, and Mrs. Price in *Mansfield Park* are excellent, notwithstanding.

³ So delightfully satirised in *Northanger Abbey*.

represents exactly opposite qualities of it—intensity, self-suppression and self-immolation, under the influence of the melancholy or the ardour of passionate love. Our two great women novelists were in the nature of their hearts and intellects essentially antagonistic one to the other.

Macaulay, as is well known, spoke of Jane Austen as one of those who approached nearest to Shakespeare in the delineation of character. Critic after critic has taken up Macaulay's expression and tried to justify and explain it—though it is clearly an oxymoron. The greatness of Jane Austen consists in the nice precision with which she adjusts a magnifying-glass to five or six well-to-do families in two or three small villages of a southern English county; and the sort of accidents and emotions she deals with are a bad cold, a broken collar-bone, a new arrival at a country house, the departure of a militia regiment, a visit to Bath, the backwardness of a gentleman at a county ball. One writer carves profiles on a cherry stone, the other rough hews a Colossus upon the eternal rock. The region of Jane Austen is that of a cultivated valley enclosed with hedges and bounded by a park wall. Shakespeare's is a mountainous country, of sounding waters and mighty precipices. In order to get an idea of Jane Austen's outstanding excellence, we must compare her not with the giants of literature; we must not measure her satire with that of Swift or Fielding or Thackeray; to compare her with George Eliot is as absurd as to compare Cowper with Wordsworth. We must endeavour to appraise her vivacity and her exquisite literary malice by comparing her work with that of the writers to whom her line of relationship is clear: Richardson, Burney, Edgeworth, Mitford, the Trollopes, and the Oliphants and their successors.

It was a great thing to be a lady author in those days. Jane Austen was compared with Shakespeare. To Maria Edgeworth both Scott and Turgenev have avowed discipleship; and more recently her *Essay on Irish Bulls* has been nobly exemplified by the inclusion of this Irish woman in the "English Men of Letters." Born at Black Bourton, Oxfordshire, on New Year's Day, 1767, the most notable circumstance in Maria's uneventful career was the fact that she had a father—Robert Lovell Edgeworth, no ordinary father, but a man escaped direct from "Crotchet Castle," and a

friend of the even more eccentric Thomas Day, author of *Sandford and Merton*. Her father introduced passages of a *triste utilité* into her books, and from the obsession of this well-meaning autocrat, and the long succession of stepmothers he placed over her, Maria never succeeded wholly in effecting her escape. In 1782 the family returned to Edgeworthstown in Ireland, and Maria began to acquire her remarkable familiarity with the manners and customs of Hibernia. She learnt the use of the pen in composing short moral tales for family use, and to this practice, as in the cognate case of Jane and Ann Taylor, we owe some of the best stories ever written for the nursery—*Waste Not Want Not*, *Forgive and Forget*, *The Purple Jar*, *The Prussian Vase*, *Lazy Lawrence*, *The Little Dog Trusty*, *Simple Susan*. The compactitude and clearness of these tales have been rivalled in this sphere only by the stories of Harriet Martineau. It is doubtful whether Maria herself ever did anything entirely better, for within their modest limits these stories are as trim and as perfect as anything of Jane Austen's. Four years older than Scott, Maria Edgeworth had fourteen years' start as a novelist. Her first and best (because unfathered) tale for adults, *Castle Rackrent*, appeared in the last year of the century (1800), fourteen years before *Waverley*. *Castle Rackrent* is a story of an Irish landed family, put into the mouth of an old steward, who in his time had served several landlords of the stock in succession—Sir Patrick, Sir Murtagh, Sir Kit, and Sir Condy, men of different character, but all agreeing in doing their best, whether by lavish expenditure, gambling, or avaricious litigation, to help on the ruin consummated by the last of the series. The faithful old retainer admires them all with all their faults, and seen through his indulgent eyes their crimes and follies, their freaks of wild expenditure and their matter-of-course extortions from their tenantry, their love-making, their hospitality, their family quarrels, and the dealings all the time of the too-faithful steward with the artful tenants, excite in the reader an extraordinary mixture of laughter and pity. It broke ground in a new field, afterwards worked to excess by craftsmen and craftswomen of all degrees of merit: it was a story of Irish life, a revelation to the English novel-readers of a new condition of society, a new range of character and emotion. Scott afterwards said of

Miss Edgeworth's Irish tales that they had done more to bind Irishmen and Englishmen together than the Union. She certainly elevated the character of the Irish peasantry in the interests of the world, showing the good and amiable qualities that underlay the too obvious indolence and thriftlessness and squalor—the gaiety of heart, the readiness of wit, the tenacious steadfastness of attachment, the helpful generosity in distress. A born realist, she did not fail to put the unfavourable traits into her picture; but she treated the failings of the Irish tenderly, in Waltonian fashion, as if she loved them. The Paddy of fiction and the stage is really her creation; she is the author of his existence in literature, of the sly, ready-witted, fluent, faithful, and generous Paddy. She had been brought very closely in contact with the poor people of Ireland as well as with the landed families of various ranks; for her father—choked with eighteenth-century philanthropic and educational theories, and ever ready to make ingenious experiments of his own—having resolved to reside on his Irish estates, determined also to get rid of middlemen as the curse of the land system, and employed his daughter practically as his steward and factor. For years of her life she had every day to grant interviews to her father's tenants, hear excuses and grievances, settle disputes, answer petitions; and on rent-days, more particularly, her hands were full. Maria's knowledge of Irish life was thus intimate, and she had a keen eye for the humorous side of it.

Miss Edgeworth never surpassed this "Hibernian Tale" of the "Country Squires" of the seventeen-seventies. Her next best story was *The Absentee*, and then *Belinda* or *Helen*. In 1823 she went to Abbotsford and was much petted by Scott, who found her full of fun and spirit; a little slight figure, very active, very good-humoured, and full of enthusiasm. She in return adored Sir Walter. Little and good, she remained busy, useful, indomitably youthful and universally beloved, right down to her death in May, 1849, at the respectable age of eighty-two.

Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan (1778[?]-1859), was the daughter of an Irishman, Robert MacOwen, an actor, who to indulge the English prejudice called himself Robert Owenson. Having been protected by a distant kinsman, no other than Noll Goldsmith, at a critical period

of his career, Owenson became a pillar of the famous Crow Street Theatre in Dublin, where he was noted for his Major O'Flaherty in Cumberland's comedy of *The West Indian*. Sydney was in the habit of seeing the wildest wits and best musicians in Dublin at her father's house. Her early training must have resembled that of Fanny Burney, in more respects than one. Among her playfellows was the boy bard, who was regarded almost as an Irish Chatterton in his day, Thomas Dermody. After a short spell at an excellent seminary, circumstances of the nomadic life indispensable to such a man as her father made Sydney his indefatigable correspondent. From the facility she found in scribbling came the natural transition to fiction. When she was seventeen she was already writing to her father that she had two novels (one imitated from *Werther*) in her desk. One of these was actually published in 1801, but her first book to attract attention was *The Wild Irish Girl* of 1806. In this and such of its successors as *O'Donnel* (1814), *Florence Macarthy* (1818), and *The O'Briens and O'Flahertys* (1827), she gives us a distinct foretaste of the rollicking Irish baronets and distressfully droll rapparees of Lever and Lover. She describes low life well, but it was her foible to pretend that she pined for the sight of a commoner, the lines of her life having been cast so exclusively among lords. The only book of hers that is glanced at to-day in all probability is her amusingly untruthful *Memoirs*, in which she denounces "Cold, false, erroneous, chronological dates." She married a Dr. (afterwards Sir Thomas) Morgan in 1812, travelled on the Continent and scribbled pretentious travel sketches, fulminated about the rights of women as an immediate pioneer of Mrs. Amelia Jenks Bloomer, and died in 1859. Of her style and sentiment Croker wrote savagely in *The Quarterly*: "Her language is an inflated jargon, composed of terms picked up in all countries, and wholly irreducible to any ordinary rules of grammar and sense. The sentiments are mischievous in tendency, profligate in principle, licentious and irreverent in the highest degree." Of her lady contemporaries it is necessary to do little more than mention Lady Charlotte Bury (1775-1861), author of such speaking novels as *Flirtation*, *Separation*, *Divorce*, and *Love*; Mary Brunton (1778-1818), authoress of novels of Richardsonian psychology, *Self Control* and *Discipline*,

the former the popular novel of 1811; Christian Isobel Johnstone (1781—1857), whose Jacobite romance of *Clan Albin* came out in 1815, and was followed by *Elizabeth de Bruce* in 1827; Lady Caroline Lamb (1785—1828), whose once notorious novel of *Glenarvon* (1816) owed its success to its caricature portrait of Byron, about whom the accomplished lady, afterwards Lady Melbourne, was to become, not in fiction merely, but in stern reality, demented;¹ and finally Jane Porter (1776—1850), author of *The Scottish Chiefs* (1810), an historical romance of the days of Wallace and Bruce which spurns historical veracity. For this very reason perhaps it became immensely popular in Scotland and was, quite indirectly no doubt, a begetter of the Waverley Novels.

Of all Jane Austen's lady contemporaries the most conspicuous figure is probably that of Hannah More. As a personal link between Johnson and Macaulay she merits a position in this history rather as a literary landmark than on account of the quality or permanence of any of her writings. Born near Bristol on February 2nd, 1745, an extraordinarily precocious and bookish child, Hannah began scribbling when she was about ten, helped to teach in her sister's school, and about 1774 made her first appearance in London society; she was soon introduced to Garrick, Reynolds, and Johnson, who laughed with her and petted her as "his child," "dearest love" and "little fool," with a fondness almost equal to that lavished upon the little Burney. She repaid these endearments by her outrageous flattery; nor was Johnson himself backward in this commodity, for he said that any poet might be glad to own her conversation-poem called the *Bas Bleu* (1784), describing the blue-stocking society of the period, of which grim sisterhood Hannah herself was to become one of the most formidable sibyls. She had been introduced by Garrick, on their first acquaintance, to Mrs. Montagu, "the wisest where all are wise." She knew the venerable Mrs. Delany, and the respectable Mrs. Carter, and the admirable Mrs. Chapone, and the excellent Mrs. Boscawen, and all the good ladies who read *The Spectator*, *The Rambler*, and admired Mrs. Montagu's triumph over Voltaire. In her early days she was secular enough to write plays and to correspond with Horace Walpole,

who professed a playful preference for his "holy Hannah"; but later her disposition became more strictly edifying, until literature was gradually abandoned, for a thing most antipathetic to it, and it was in the capacity not of a playwright but of a practical philanthropist that she first became known to the little Tom Macaulay. Even in her most frolicsome days she can scarcely be numbered among the corporation of lady novelists, yet her most successful tracts, such as *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, *Village Politics by Will Chip*, both written as antidotes to the French Revolution, in the downright pamphleteering style afterwards perfected by Cobbett, and still more *Cælebs in Search of a Wife*, published in 1809, bear a specious resemblance to prose fiction, which assisted no doubt to further their enormous circulation. The once famous *Cælebs* was justly characterised by Sydney Smith in *The Edinburgh Review* as being less a novel than a dramatic sermon. It was natural that moralists, in a generation distinguished for its philanthropic endeavour, all the more conspicuous that philanthropy was a new passion among the upper classes—it was natural that in a generation which produced Wilberforce and Clarkson, the agitation for the abolition of the slave trade, and the impeachment of Warren Hastings for the oppression of the Hindus, moralists should try to press into their service the revived art of story-telling, for the production of which the reading public were so clamorous. And the consequence was natural that Hannah More's tales, intended to counteract the influence of the French Revolution, and teach the common people to rely upon the virtues of content, sobriety, humility, industry, reverence for the British Constitution, trust in God and in the kindness of the gentry, were circulated in thousands and hundreds of thousands.

Intellectually Hannah More was one of the brightest and most vivacious of the middle-class sect known at the beginning of the nineteenth century as evangelicals, whose particular phase of belief and sentiments has with the lapse of time, been, perhaps, unduly discredited. Like so many of a similar way of thinking, Hannah More accumulated considerable property, and became an object of widespread veneration during her last years at Clifton. She died there at the age of eighty-

¹ Another high-life novelist was the Marquis of Normanby, author of *Matilda* and *Yes and No* (1825-7).

eight, on September 7th, 1833, retaining her memories of Johnson, Burke and Garrick almost to the last. She and her four sisters were all buried at Wrington.

More feminine and more lasting, too, than the work of the excellent Hannah are the *Recollections*, village stories, and *Letters* of Mary Russell Mitford, who was born at Alresford [Cranley] in December, 1787, was reduced from opulence to penury by a father of the type of Daudet's immortal Delobelle, and died at Swallowfield, near Reading, poor for all her untiring labour, but cheerful and bright to the last, in January, 1855. Writing in a large armchair in the corner of her tiny garden, this quaint little lady-bird, who might have come out of *Cranford*, had in her day been an enormous reader, the winner of a £20,000 prize in a lottery, the authoress of a play, *Rienzi*, that ran for one hundred nights under Macready, and the correspondent of all the literary lions of the day. Outwardly demure, inwardly

effusive and sentimental in the highest degree, her delicate little historiettes, afterwards collected as *Our Village*, made the fortune of *The Lady's Magazine* of 1819-20 and started a new graphic genre. Like a silvery chime of village bells it made the hamlet of Three Mile Cross famous, coachmen pointed out the cottage with their whips, and the writing world was enraptured by the spontaneity and charm of such work. More interesting to-day are Miss Mitford's *Recollections* and *Letters*, through which runs the same dainty precision of touch that marked her essays and tales. Like her contemporaries and friends, the Howitts, Mrs. Hemans, “L. E. L.,” Mrs. Clarke, Miss Martineau, Miss Barrett, the Halls, Mrs. Jameson, Mrs. Trollope, and the rest, she lived and moved in an atmosphere of books; and when she was not writing books she was writing about them, usually with an intensity of feeling and expression and, more rarely, a small thread-like vein of pleasantry.

II

Miss Ferrier—John Galt—Michael Scott—Thomas Hamilton—D. M. Moir.

THE novels of Susan Edmonstone Ferrier are such as might naturally be expected to come after—they could hardly have come before—those of Miss Austen and Miss Edgeworth. She really, in fact, fulfilled the task which Scott in his deprecatory fashion spoke of achieving—that, namely, of doing for Scotland what Miss Edgeworth had done for Ireland. Of Miss Ferrier herself there is little to know, save that she was the amiable and clever daughter of James Ferrier, an Edinburgh advocate, who was also a factor of the Duke of Argyle, and had numerous influential friends, both in Highlands and Lowlands, among them Sir Walter Scott. Her novels may be said to bear something the same relation in point of merit to those of Jane Austen, as those of Galt do to those of Scott. Yet Miss Ferrier's three progressively popular novels, *Marriage* (1818), *The Inheritance* (1824), and *Destiny* (1831), have many positive merits, and have been unduly neglected. Miss Ferrier's powers of observation were acute, and her delineations, dramatic, humorous, full of vivacity, attained to a pitch of excellence which, had it been combined with a higher constructive skill and a greater power of sustaining the story, would

have raised her to a very high position among character novelists. She depended greatly upon close personal observation, the colours of which are seen, perhaps, most vividly in her first novel, called *Marriage*, which Scott specially admired. Her portraits of old Scotchwomen of the *ancien régime*, of which there are several in this novel alone, have never been surpassed, and could have hardly been bettered even by Scott himself. Inferior as the story is, Miss Ferrier attained to real high comedy in the passage between Miss Pratt and Lord Rossville in *The Inheritance*. *Destiny*, though it fetched the highest price (£1,700), is the least vital of the three.

John Galt can hardly be termed an imitator of Scott, since his first successful novel, *The Annals of the Parish*, was planned and partly written as early as 1813, and both it and a series of sketches of Scottish character, to which he gave the title *The Ayrshire Legatees*, are derived avowedly from Goldsmith and Smollett rather than from any later sources of inspiration. As a matter of fact, however, these sketches of Scottish country life, though far less didactic and more humorous, attempt precisely the same portraiture of character which Crabbe had exhibited in his tales. Something of the

same kind, as Henry Mackenzie pointed out, had moreover been attempted for Scotland in 1808 by Elizabeth Hamilton, in her *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, in which the conservative slovenliness and lack of foresight of the Scotch peasantry is exhibited with a fidelity admitted by Scott to be extreme. With the help of an extraordinary memory for recollecting and combining the materials of everyday life, Galt certainly succeeded in depicting the good and bad points of the society in the south-western corner of Scotland with a Wilkie-like fidelity, nay more, in the character of Micah Balwhidder, the parish annalist, he created a character of a naïveté and simplicity not wholly unworthy to rank with that of Parson Adams and Dr. Primrose.

When we turn from this creation to its author we are surprised at the total inability of his biographer, himself the author of *Mansie Wauch*, to invest the adventurous career of John Galt with the least glimmer of interest. Born in May, 1779, at Irvine, in Ayrshire, John Galt was the son of a sea-captain. As a child he loved stories and ballads and the society of the poor and garrulous old women of his native place. Fifteen years were spent at Greenock, where he was schooled and became a custom-house clerk. In 1803 he went to London, failed in a partnership, was entered at Lincoln's Inn, and commenced writing as a profession. In 1809 to 1811 he travelled in the Near East, in search of some plan for evading Napoleon's Berlin Decrees, and saw a good deal of Byron. In 1813 he had a scheme for smuggling English goods from Gibraltar into Spain, but Wellington's success rendered the plan abortive. He returned to England, married and commenced novelist. This was the period of his great successes, *The Annals*, *The Provost*, with its inimitable character of Provost Pawkie—the incarnation of Scottish municipal life—and *The Entail*. It was fresh from the elation of these successes that he embarked upon the direction of a pioneering company in Canada for which neither his character nor his powers adequately fitted him.

Galt hardly deserves the style of novelist upon the strength of *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1820) and *Annals of the Parish* (1821). The first is a series of letters in Smollettian style enclosing a story, the second a string of village tales such as in *Our Village*, *Thrums*, and *Johnny Ludlow* have again and again proved

popular to successive generations. *The Provost* was devised as a grouping of local impressions complementary to *The Annals*. *Sir Andrew Wyllie* (1822) was his first novel in the modern English sense, and in 1823 came what is perhaps the best of his larger canvasses, *The Entail*. In this figure what are perhaps his best characters, Claud Walkinshaw the pawky pedlar, Watty the natural, and the striking portrait of Leddy Grippy. Imagining fondly enough that he was qualified to compete with Scott in historical romance, Galt now put forth three completely forgotten novels, *Ringhan Gilhaize*, *The Spaewife*, and *Rothelan* (1823-4). One excellent story of rough childhood and emigrant effort still remained for him to write when fresh from his Canadian experiences. This was *Lawrie Todd*, which was published by Bentley in three volumes in 1830; it contains a close and graphic account of the infancy of a small community in the backwoods of America.

The theory that Galt was treading hard upon the heels of the "Great Unknown" (Scott) was at any time an absurd one. He approached Sir Walter only in the resistless energy of his pen, and his determination to try his skill upon every species of composition. Thus, in addition to his novels, which alone at the present day maintain any kind of claim to a place in the second class of literature, Galt produced *Travels*, and *Letters from the Levant*, containing some much controverted details about Byron, Lives of Wolsey, of Benjamin West, and of Byron, *Lives of the Players* (1831), literary miscellanies, short stories, political stories, poems, plays. His voluble energy and plausible versatility filled up almost every literary mould, and showed how most kinds of literary work could be executed from the best, or nearly the best, style to one within measurable distance of the worst. On his return to England, he retained a few good friends, such as Lockhart and Moir; and he was entrusted, for a short period in 1831, with the editorship of an important Tory organ, *The Courier*. In this same year he left London in very poor circumstances, the recipient of a small pension from the Literary Fund. Like Scott, he had to look to literature to compensate for ill-success in commercial ventures, and he also paid the penalty of over-taxed powers before attaining the age of sixty. He died of premature decay in the house of a sister at Greenock in April, 1839.

Among the minor novelists who followed Galt in contributing to the gaiety of the earlier pages of *Blackwood* may fitly be mentioned here Michael Scott, Thomas Hamilton, and D. M. Moir.

Michael Scott was born and taught at Glasgow, whither he returned, after sixteen years' successful trading in Jamaica, in 1822. Seven years later he worked up some of his experiences into a series of highly coloured chapters, issued in book form as *Tom Cringle's Log* and *The Cruise of the "Midge,"* and loudly acclaimed, not only in England, but also in France, Germany, and America. They were attributed to Christopher North and to Captain Marryat, whose *Frank Mildmay* had appeared in 1829, and they elicited the epithet of "excellent" from no less a critic than S. T. Coleridge. *Tom Cringle* was spoken of as a giant even as late as 1862, when a finely illustrated edition of his books was issued; but he is certainly a giant no longer, and it is by no means easy to discover the grounds of his former popularity. One is driven to the conclusion that the less sophisticated taste of the day was gratified by the well-written descriptions of exotic scenery, amused by the vagaries of negro dialect, and thrilled by the nonchalance (often ridiculed later in the case of Marryat and Lever) with which the author deals out death and destruction to all the non-essential characters. Scott died at Glasgow on November 7th, 1835, at the early age of forty-six.

A college companion of Michael Scott, and a younger brother of Sir William Hamilton, the metaphysician, was Thomas Hamilton, a half-pay officer, who had fought bravely at Albuera, and who in 1818 joined the *Blackwood* militia. He was subsequently a popular neighbour, first of Scott and Lockhart and then of Wordsworth. He died at Pisa in December, 1842, aged only fifty-three. Hamilton was a good raconteur, and his novel, *The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton*, in 1827 made a very decided hit. It is in many respects a prototype of the Lever novel. The family details of the dénouement are, as is usual in this kind of novel, extremely unconvincing. Like Thackeray (at the end of *Vanity Fair*), Hamilton concludes his romance by over-deliberately putting away his puppets.

David Macbeth Moir (Δ), a Musselburgh physician, of the most copious and determined energy as a writer, both in prose and verse, was another *Blackwood* celebrity. His essays and introductions, with their slovenly vocabulary and plentiful lack of originality, do but ill support the shadowy fame which once attached to the signature "Δ." But he is remembered to this day, at any rate locally, by "*The Life of Mansie Wauch, Tailor in Dalkeith*, written by Himself," which was given to *Maga* in 1824, and reissued in 1828. Moir owed his inspiration for this rambling and plotless style of narrative directly to Galt's *Annals*; the result, at any rate, was to confirm in a measure of popularity the cots, the kailyards, and the thrumes. The merit of the species is to be estimated by the amount of relief which it manages to get out of the most common and trivial domestic incidents, and judged by this standard *Mansie Wauch* occupies a very high place. Moir died on July 6th, 1851, at the early age of fifty-two. Among other early supports of *Blackwood*, it is enough to name "Roly-poly," George Croly (1780—1860), author of *Salathiel*, a story of the past, the present, and the future, embroidered upon the supposed challenge of the words, "Tarry thou till I come," which was deemed strong sensation in 1829; and the soldier-priest, Chaplain-general G. R. Gleig (1796—1888), whose story of *The Subaltern* (1825), with just one thrilling scene of an inspection by Wellington, paved the way for a dedication to the Iron Duke, which led eventually to Gleig's becoming official biographer and editor of the truly wonderful volumes of Wellington's *Despatches*.

The authorised biography of Jane Austen is that by her nephew, J. E. Austen Leigh, 1870 and 1871. There are further biographical studies by Goldwin Smith, Oscar Fay Adams, W. H. Pollock, Sarah Tytler,* Miss Malden, Constance Hill (1902), and G. E. Mitton (1905).

Of Maria Edgeworth, apart from the authorised *Life and Letters*, ed. A. J. C. Hare, there are biographical studies by Julia Cavanagh, Helen Zimmern, Grace Oliver, Mrs. Ritchie (in the *Book of Sibyls*, and her Introduction to *Popular Tales*, 1903), and Emily Lawless,* the author of that most beautiful of all modern Irish stories, *Grania*. Charming *Morceaux* from *Our Village* have been issued, with Introductions, by Mrs. Ritchie; in the Camelot Series; and in the Temple Classics.

CHAPTER VII

NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORIANS: FROM MITFORD TO MACAULAY

"With all his faults, Macaulay's great qualities may well make rivals despair. The pictures which he has drawn have, rightly or wrongly, stamped themselves ineffaceably upon the popular mind. If his long hesitation between two careers prevented the completion of his *History* while limiting his political success, it also gave to his writings the rare value of wide literary accomplishment combined with keen insight of practical experience.

—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

"I wish," said Lord Melbourne, "that I was as sure of any one thing as Tom Macaulay is sure of everything."

"He is too exultant. . . . An author who transfers to literature the vigour and splendour of oratory inevitably transfers to it also a trait which, in literature, is less pleasing—viz. the orator's triumphant manner of clinching an argument."—*Macaulay*, by Sir R. C. JEBB.

Early Victorian historians—Mitford, Thirlwall, and Grote—Arnold, Long, and Merivale—Milman's *Latin Christianity*—Finlay's *History of Greece*—Roscoe's *Leo X.*—James Mill—*Histories of India*—Alison—Napier's *Peninsular War*—Lingard and Hallam—Lord Macaulay.

WILLIAM MITFORD (1744—1827), who came of a family of writers, was educated at Cheam and Queen's College, Oxford, and the Middle Temple. As a young man he came into contact with Bentham and with Gibbon, who was a fellow officer in the South Hampshire Militia. Gibbon advised him to make a hobby of history, and to supply the great need in English literature of a readable history of Greece. This Mitford proceeded with great deliberation to do, and in twenty-six years, 1784-1810, produced a creditable and thoroughly readable *History of Greece*. Unfortunately he regarded his history as a hobby-horse to tilt against the Jacobins with, and with this *parti-pris* he found little to praise and much to blame in the Athenian democracy. His partiality for Sparta (old England), and hatred for Athens (revolutionary France), degrade much of his work to the level of a party pamphlet, and produced an unfortunate series of reactions. Mitford died in the Tory faith at his seat of Exbury in February, 1827.

Mitford's undisguised partiality provoked a resentment in George Grote, which led him to plan his great standard *History of Greece*, but meanwhile, between 1835 and 1844, Connop Thirlwall (1797—1875), a Liberal Fellow of

Trinity, Cambridge, whose precocity was such that he could read Greek at four, in the retirement of a Yorkshire vicarage wrote a dignified *History of Greece* in eight small volumes for Lardner's *Cyclopædia*. Thirlwall had previously worked upon a translation of Niebuhr's Roman History, and had become deeply imbued with that great scholar's high ideals of thoroughness and impartiality. In the later portions of his work especially he rises to a high standard of excellence both in style and method of presentment, and the fortune of his book, to be almost wholly superseded by that of his early friend Grote, is a good example of the blight which evil luck may cast over the destinies of works which deserve a much better fate than total eclipse. Thirlwall's noble qualities, both intellectual and moral, were subsequently exercised for thirty-four years as Bishop of St. David's.

George Grote (1794—1871), born at Clay Hill, near Beckenham, was the grandson of an evangelical divine, and son of a partner in Prescott's bank, which he entered from Charterhouse at sixteen. His innate love of historical and political philosophy was greatly stimulated by his admission into the circle of Bentham's disciples, one of whom, James Mill, in 1822

first directed his ambition to the production of a philosophical history of Greece. Subsequently he became an active member of the discussion society presided over by John Stuart Mill, to debate problems of economics and logic. His immediate objects, apart from his business, were for a time almost wholly political, and centred round the introduction of the ballot and the promotion of higher education, especially in connection with the new University of London, of which he eventually became Vice-Chancellor. He also entered Parliament for the City of London as an advanced reformer in 1832. But he never ceased to employ much of his leisure in reading for his *magnum opus*, though his reading found an outlet for the time in little beyond a few special memoirs and articles destructive of Mitford in *The Westminster Review*. In 1843, however, he retired from active business and politics, and concentrated his attention upon the composition of his *History*, which appeared in twelve volumes between 1846 and 1856.

Grote's political fervour was intense, and his *History of Greece* was regarded by him, hardly less than by Mitford, as a polemical engine—for the defence of democratic views, through the agency of the Athenian democracy so unfairly traduced by the Tory historian. Nevertheless, Grote was scrupulous in his use of authorities, and genuinely desirous of arriving at the Greek point of view. His zeal and energy, combined with his skill as a narrator, and as an investigator of evidence, give his history a supremacy among books of its own class, and a high position not only in England but in Europe. His arrangement is generally good. The deficiencies are those of style and of imaginative power. Nevertheless, his book was an immense advance on anything yet written in England upon the subject, and it is in a conspicuous degree careful, accurate, thorough, and generous both in conception and growth.

Mitford, Thirlwall, and Grote, though none of them could aspire to distinctive historical genius, had carried synthetic views of Greek history by successive stages a good way beyond Goldsmith. During much the same period a similar service was performed for the history of Rome by Arnold, Long, and Merivale.

Thomas Arnold (1795—1842), son of a Customs officer at Cowes, had a distinguished career at Winchester, Corpus, and Oriel, and

became as a former of character and leader of men, whether as coach, head master of Rugby, liberal Churchman, or Regius Professor at Oxford, more famous even than as the historian of Rome. He was always an enthusiastic admirer of the Greek historians, whom he much preferred to the Latin, but after the appearance of Niebuhr's *History of Rome* (1812, first English version 1827) he fell entirely under the sway of that great master's erudition and revolutionary combinations and hypotheses. Unfortunately he only began publishing in 1838, and his three volumes end abruptly with the close of the second Punic War.

From the era of Pyrrhus to that point his history exhibits great qualities. His implicit faith in Niebuhr's theories as to the reconstruction of regal Rome upon a legendary basis render his earlier chapters unacceptable by modern scholars. These theories were first compromised by the keen and sceptical intelligence of Sir George Cornewall Lewis (1806—1863), in his very able *Inquiry into the Credulity of Early Roman History* (1855).

Like most of the Early Victorian historians, Arnold is preternaturally didactic, and very fond of propagating his political views through the medium of ancient history. His idea of history for history's sake was subservient occasionally, it may be thought, to a slightly provincial view of historic justice, but he was the pioneer of the study of history in our public schools and universities, and to him is credited the noble saying that "the writing of history is in some sort a religious act." An historian of a much drier light was George Long (1800—1879), who was bracketed as prizeman with Macaulay at Trinity and beat him in the Fellowship. Long did a great deal of compiling for dictionaries and cyclopædias, was himself editor of *The Penny Cyclopædia*, and is widely known for an excellent version of Marcus Aurelius. He made himself a master of Roman law and ancient geography. In 1860 he began publishing his *Decline of the Roman Republic* in five volumes, commencing with the Punic Wars, and thus forming a link between Arnold and Merivale. He is a cold, precise, and logical writer, without emotion or colour, but he shows a thorough command of his subject, especially from the constitutional point of view. In popularity the impassive and impartial Long has naturally fallen an easy prey to Mommsen,

with whose period his own coincides. The story of Rome is taken up by Charles Merivale (1808—1893), another Cambridge man and “apostle” (after Tennyson), whose dramatically written *Fall of the Roman Republic* (1853) was followed by the elaborate, but too diffusive, *History of the Romans under the Empire* (1850-64). Long and Merivale were as opposite in their style as were Arnold and Gibbon in their tone. Long wrote in short sentences from which every trace of sentiment was carefully eliminated. Merivale indited polished periods with a flowing pen, but without more of real feeling. Arnold, Long, and Merivale between them carried Roman history from its origins to Diocletian, where Gibbon takes up the tale: and it is continued in a sense by Henry Hart Milman (1791—1868), Dean of St. Paul’s (1849). He cast lustre upon the decanal chair of that august foundation by his great *History of Latin Christianity* (1854-6). He had previously written a history of Christianity to the fall of paganism; he now carefully distinguished “Latin” from Greek and Teutonic Christianity, and carried the story on down to Nicholas V. A more scientific Church history of Christendom from the Apostolic Age to the Reformation, though a far less readable one, was brought out by Canon James Craigie Robertson (1813—1882) between 1850 and 1873.

As the history of the Western Empire was continued by Milman, so that of the Eastern Empire was carried on by George Finlay (1799—1875) in an admirable history of the Greek nation from the death of Alexander the Great down to his own day. *Greece under the Romans* (1843) was followed by *The Byzantine Empire from 716 to 1057* (preface dated Athens, September 1st, 1852). In these two volumes he traversed ground already covered, and much more completely explored since. His next volume, dealing with *Greece under the Crusaders*, was more original. Then came *Greece under Ottoman and Venetian Dominion* (1856), and finally *The Greek Revolution* (1861), a detailed history of events of which he had to a large extent been an eye-witness, down to the accession of King Otho in 1844. Incidentally he gives an interesting picture of Byron’s intervention in Greek affairs. Finlay is no stylist, but he gives a thoughtful and, in the main, trustworthy history of events hitherto shrouded in great obscurity.

Of the few English historians of high merit who have gone beyond the narrow circle of antiquity and Western Europe, two must receive something beyond passing mention—William Roscoe and James Mill. Son of mine host of the Bowling Green Tavern on Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, William Roscoe was brought up to gardening, but turned at an early age irredeemably to books. His quickness and good handwriting procured his entrance into a solicitor’s office, in the work of which he made rapid progress and obtained advancement. With the aid of a valetudinarian friend, who had to go to Fiesole for his health, Roscoe now gradually accumulated material for an elaborate biographical picture of Lorenzo de’ Medici, a subject which had attracted him from boyhood. Proofs were in 1794 submitted to Horace Walpole, the great art patron of the day, and in February, 1796, the book appeared, a somewhat ill-knit biographical and historical medley, but full of miscellaneous interest. It was appreciated abroad, and Tuscan scholars are said to have been loud in its praise. Amidst business cares, with much aid from Italian correspondents, Roscoe found time to continue the subject in his life of Lorenzo’s famous son, *Pope Leo X.*, written between 1798 and 1805. As is so often the case when an author tries to be exceptionally fair, *Leo X.* pleased neither Catholics nor Protestants. The Protestants called it papistical, while the Pope put it on the Index Librorum Prohibitorum. Roscoe misses the subtleties and ironies of the subject and period, but abounds in digressions (Aretino, Raffaele, etc.) which have some interest. It has been superseded to a large extent by the studies of Creighton, Symonds, Van Reumont, and Gregorovius. Both of Roscoe’s books have become articles of *virtu* with an acknowledged right to a cabinet in the literary museum, but one which is now seldom opened. The historian met money troubles in later years with great fortitude, and died aged seventy-eight, on June 30th, 1831, at Liverpool, of which city he had been for a short time a prominent anti-slavery M.P. Besides his histories he wrote the dainty little nursery classic called *The Butterfly’s Ball* in 1807, and executed a mediocre edition of Pope, 1821. His works did much to arouse an interest in Italian history and literature.

James Mill (1773—1836), the son of a

Forfarshire shoemaker, was well trained for the ministry at Montrose and Aberdeen, and in 1798 began to preach, but proved a stickit minister. He was already a man in mental purpose, with a vigorous though rigid intellect, when he came up to London to write in 1802. To distinguish himself from the herd of journalists and compilers he planned out an elaborate *History of British India* as early as 1806. He worked heroically at the *History*, which was to win him fame and independence, and it finally appeared in 1817, a work of strenuous originality, but dry and stern as its author, most of whose political prejudices it very faithfully reproduced. It is not based on first-hand observation, for Mill was never in India, and had to depend upon blue-books and gazetteers, but it is a work of conscience, clear in exposition and uncompromising in its championship of unpopular views. The mantle of Bentham fell upon Mill, and he was for many years the intellectual leader of the Radical utilitarian ("greatest good of the greatest number") party, steering cautiously between the Whigs of *The Edinburgh* and Holland House on the one hand and the revolutionaries (Hunt, Cartwright, Cobbett, and Hone) on the other. His main following consisted of Ricardo, Matthews, McCulloch, Grote, and the *Westminster* Reviewers, led by his son John Stuart. He remained an unbending Benthamite to the end—a doctrinaire who accepted Benthamism as unreservedly as a mathematician might accept Newton's *Principia*! Among our historians of India since Orme and Mill the two most meritorious have been John Clark Marshman (1794—1877), a missionary worker in India, whose final *History* was completed in three volumes, 1863-7, and James Talboys Wheeler (1824—1897), an Indian official, whose great *History* in five volumes, 1867-81, contains the best account of the early and Mahomedan periods, besides embodying invaluable *resumés* of the great Hindu epics, the *Maha Bharata* and *Ramayana*.

We must now turn to a somewhat utilitarian, but not to be despised, historian, who took modern Europe at its most eventful period as his province, and found that almost too small for him—the worthy Scots Tory, criminal lawyer, judge, Sheriff of Lanarkshire, and eventually baronet, Sir Archibald Alison (1792—1867), son of the essayist on *Taste*.

Alison's *History*, much laughed at for its prolixity and bigoted partisanship, more justly censured for its commonplaceness of style, is a remarkable book—a huge chronicle map of a period of twenty years, into which were condensed the dramatic vicissitudes of a century. Deficient in critical taste, and ridiculously formal and conventional as Alison often is, he was generous in many of his judgments (of Danton and Napoleon, for instance), and he had a very good idea of describing a battle in detail, and of varying his narrative. Alison drew much of his military materials from the principals themselves, Napoleon, the Archduke Charles, and the Wellington *Despatches*, much also from Matthieu Dumas's great history of the European War from 1799 to 1814, but for the greater part of the Peninsular portion of his narrative he had the benefit of Sir William Napier's already famous *History*. A brother of Sir Charles, the conqueror of Scinde, and cousin of Admiral Sir Charles Napier, William entered the army as his natural element, and served under Sir John Moore in the campaign which terminated at Coruna. He served with gallantry on the Coa, at Busaco, Fuentes d'Onoro, Salamanca, and Orthez. He commenced his *History of the Peninsular War* at the same time that Grote began his *Greece*, consulted both with Wellington and Soult, and brought out his first volume in 1828. The sixth and last appeared in 1840. By the scrupulous care and attention which he paid to details of fact, and also of style, Napier gained a well-deserved reputation; but he was a very opinionative writer, and a most pugnacious hero-worshipper. Some of Napier's battle pieces, though slightly over-complicated, and perhaps over-coloured, are generally considered supreme in their own line. The gallant writer, in whom partisanship developed with years, died in February, 1860, aged seventy-five, and was buried in St. Paul's. A more judicial chronicler of the Peninsular War has appeared in Prof. C. W. Oman, who writes also as a politician and a partisan (on the other side), but certainly not as a hero-worshipper either of Wellington or Napoleon. He follows Napier too closely in some respects, but deviates into error in depreciating Napoleon's foresight, and goes beyond his predecessor in isolating the affairs of Spain from those of Europe.

The two most notable historians of England during the interregnum between Gibbon and

Macaulay were Lingard and Hallam. John Lingard (1771—1851), a born student of humble parentage, led a rough and austere life of labour at Douay, and after the migration of the College to England, occasioned by the French Revolution, at several old houses in the neighbourhood of Durham and subsequently at Ushaw. Between 1819 and 1830 he brought out the successive volumes of his *History of England* from the Roman invasion to 1688. In spite of the fact that his book was totally deficient in the literary graces, it remains the best general survey of our history we have on a large scale, and is of some independent value as regards the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As a Catholic Lingard is somewhat unduly severe on Cranmer.

Had not the exclusive right of the epithet judicious already been "bespoke," it would have been reserved for Henry Hallam (1777—1859), the son of a dean, an Eton and Christ Church and Inner Temple man, as dignified in his life and appearance as in his works—the product, as in the case of Gibbon, Grote, Milman, and Merivale, of a fine library and a life freed from sordid cares by a substantial post, well paid and but lightly encumbered with duties. As first in England to supplement the highly condensed and somewhat crude sketch of Robertson, his *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818, revised 1848) is a wonderful monument of synthetic architecture, though its foundations have necessarily yielded in various directions under the application of subsequent research. *The Constitutional History of England* (1827), from Henry VII. to 1760, has proved of more durable quality and remains unrivalled as an authority for the legislative development and growth of institutions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *The Introduction to the Literature of Europe* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1837-8), executed under the burden of declining years and the loss of the sons that he idolised, illustrates in a remarkable degree Hallam's marvellous powers of concentration, proportion, and perspective. The task, however, was beyond one man's power, and especially, perhaps, that of a man like Hallam, whose critical instinct, though wide and various, was shrewd rather than sensi-

tive, and had rigid limits in the direction of passion and romantic feeling.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, son of Zachary Macaulay (1768—1838), noted as a philanthropist, strong opponent of slavery, and pious evangelical of what was known as the Clapham Sect, by Selina (Mills), the daughter of a Quaker bookseller of Bristol, who had been a favourite pupil of Hannah More, and remained her friend, was born at Rothley Temple, in Leicestershire, on St. Crispin's Day (October 25th), 1800. As in the case of Dr. Johnson, his tenacious memory was stored direct from a bookseller's shop. When he went up to Trinity, Cambridge, in 1818, his acquirements were already extraordinary; there he continued accumulating and correlating rather than analysing or philosophising. The highest distinctions of the place fell naturally to his share, and he became a Fellow of Trinity in 1824. He was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1826, but was already committed to a literary rather than a legal ambition by articles here and there, culminating in the essay in *The Edinburgh* on Milton which made him famous. Here was evidently a rhetorician of the very first order whose views were clear-cut Whig. A seat was provided for him at Calne in the Parliament of 1830, and Macaulay was hailed after his first speech as the coming orator of his party. In May, 1831, he took his seat at the dining-table of Holland House, where his wonderful monologues amazed the guests, and were frequently guillotined by the imperious hostess.¹

In 1832 he was appointed Secretary of the Indian Board of Control, and in December, 1833, he accepted a lucrative post on the Supreme Council of the Governor-General in India. Exile was most distasteful to him, but he was poor. By useful and durable work (the Indian Penal Code was mainly his) in India, from 1834 to 1838, he purchased the coveted independence, and came back to settle in the Albany as a bachelor and to write his *History*. As Merivale once said of him with some justice, he seemed to have come into the world quite devoid of sexual and also of spiritual feelings. He was not exactly a specialist in the modern or scientific sense, but if ever a man was specialised, or specially

¹ Sydney Smith once said of himself and Macaulay: "Oh, yes, we both talk a great deal; but I don't think Macaulay ever did hear my voice. Sometimes when I have told a good story I have thought to myself, 'Poor Macaulay, he'll be very sorry some day to have missed hearing that.'"



From a Painting by Sir Francis Grant

Thomas Babington Macaulay

created for the purpose of writing a great history, or making a great king "live for ever," that man was Macaulay.

Early in 1839 he was elected for Edinburgh, and almost immediately entered the Cabinet as Secretary for War, a post which he held until 1841. In the same year a Philadelphia publisher started a collection of his *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, which had a great circulation in America. In 1842 appeared that most stirring *tour de force* of a prose writer in the guise of a poet, *The Lays of Ancient Rome*, and in 1843 a London publisher was emboldened to issue the *Critical and Historical Essays*, which took the English public by storm, and found their way to the remotest cabins and log-huts of the colonies. No longer immersed in politics, ejected from his seat at Edinburgh ("manumitted by a slap on the face"), and excluded by his own stern decree from the pages of *The Edinburgh Review*, Macaulay was at length able to concentrate his undivided attention upon the *History*, which he hoped to bring from the death of Charles II. down to the end of the reign of George III.—"a time which is within the memory of men still living."

As Mr. Paul justly says, his *History* could not have been finished by any one of less vitality than Methuselah, if the original design had been pursued on a uniform scale. His tableau of England in chapter iii. is a thing absolutely unique alike in compression, range, and picturesqueness. He is apt to disparage the past in comparison with the present. Yet, as a whole, Macaulay improves as he progresses towards the reign of Anne, which was his own period *par excellence*, and his sense of proportion upon a large scale, but above all his skill in grouping and arrangement, become more and more manifest. The first two volumes appeared in December, 1848, the third and fourth in 1855. They created an increasing furore in the reading world. No historical work has ever done the like. No historian has approached him as a master of *mise-en-scène* or creator of such a gallery of portraits as that contained, for instance, in his twentieth chapter. Macaulay achieved for the period from the death of Charles II. to the Peace of Ryswick what Thucydides had done for the Peloponnesian War. When his book appeared an honest man said, "I suppose something

happened between 1689 and 1697; but what happened I do not know." "Every one knows now."¹

Among such a host of readers it was not likely that any mistakes would escape censure by escaping observation. Professional critics of varying degrees of animus and information, from Croker and Paget to Forster and Churchill Babington, impugned the historian's accuracy and good faith. Yet, when we sum up the delinquencies which this combined host brought to light, what do they amount to? Macaulay wrote with a rather strong but diminishing Whig bias. He confused two William Penns and three Sir John Knights. In his birdseye view of English life he omitted all reference to music, at a time when English music was represented by Purcell. He exaggerated the social discredit of the clergy. Macaulay courts conviction of error in a way by his habitual precision of statement, his avoidance of vague and guarded utterance, his passion for corroborative detail in the obscurest corners of his subject. Yet what great historian upon a great scale has ever committed so few positive blunders? His chief faults are rather a lack of subtlety as regards characterisation and motive, a disposition to envisage history too exclusively as a politician and the sequence of events as a kind of ordered progress towards the somewhat material ideals of Whig optimism in 1851, and a seemingly irresistible determination to verbal and structural repetition, antithesis, and over-emphasis in respect of style. All these, it seems to us, are the more or less inevitable defects of the very qualities which render his pages so perennially entertaining.

The great qualities and defects of the essayist vary considerably from those of the historian. The *Essays* were written in the first instance more or less hastily for periodical consumption, with none of the elaborate care in verification and revision which was lavished upon the *History*; and they represent the flow of suggestive talk and the prodigious memory and illustrative faculty of the man rather than his carefully considered opinions. They are the meteorites of his memory rather than the systematic products of the historian's mind. But they abound in picturesque passages, and at times surpass even the *History* in eloquent outbursts. Their wealth of allusion, by which

¹ Bagehot writing in 1856.

one part of history or literature is constantly brought to bear upon another, makes them the most stimulating of diets for a young student. The short biographies of Johnson, Goldsmith, Pitt, Atterbury, and Bunyan which he wrote for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* are perfect models of artistic condensation and dignified rotundity of style.

The lustre which the *History* had shed upon Macaulay rendered the Modern Athens a little ashamed of its exclusion of the greatest contemporary luminary of letters. He was re-elected in 1852 upon the express stipulation that he was not to be worried by his constituents. Every kind of honorific distinction, culminating with a peerage in 1857, was bestowed upon him. The first signs of a physical break-up were apparent in 1852, when in a single week he grew "twenty years older." No human being could stand for very long such a strain as he imposed upon himself with the *History*. His extraordinarily busy intellectual life, full of active friendships and sociability, came to a sudden and pathetic end on Christmas Day, 1859, when a numbness took possession of his brain and a drowsiness of his body. He died in his literary chair three days later. He was buried on January 9, 1860, in one of his favourite haunts—the Poets' Corner

of the Abbey. "He lies at the foot of Addison's statue, near to Johnson, and among many others of our most famous statesmen and men of letters." So wrote Dean Milman in the special memoir prefixed to the posthumous editions of Macaulay's immortal *History*. His death took place at his house called Holly Lodge, on Campden Hill, above the doorway of which a memorial tablet was unveiled by Lord Rosebery on November 20th, 1903. "Full orb'd," said Gladstone, "Macaulay was seen above the horizon; and full orb'd after thirty-five years of constantly emitted splendour, he sank below it."

In deploring the premature close of a career so brilliant England felt the irreparable loss of what passed away with him—the heaped-up treasures of that vast memory, the ideas conceived and put in train by that powerful and active intelligence. Who but one man, and that man Macaulay, was capable of bringing these treasures to light, and of giving form and substance to those superb structures of the historical imagination? What other man could continue the wonderful *History* so profoundly studied yet so lucidly presented, of which he left a mere torso—yet a torso of greater value and price than almost any of the finished monuments in the Historical Temple.

THE main authority for Lord Macaulay is Sir George Otto Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay** (2 vols. 1876), one of the most attractive and entertaining specimens of biographical compilation in English, or, indeed, any other language. Subsidiary studies and criticisms will be found in Cotter Morison's *Macaulay* (English Men of Letters); Sir Leslie Stephen's articles (in *Hours in a Library* and *Dict. Nat. Biog.* xxxiv.); Bagehot's *Literary Studies*; John Morley's *Critical Miscellanies*; Herbert Paul's *Men and Letters* (1901); Taine's *English Literature*; Richard Lodge in *Chambers's Cyclopædia of English Literature*, iii. 367; A. J. Grant's *English Historians* (1906); Sir J. F. Stephen's *Story of Nuncomar* (1885); John Paget's *Puzzles and Paradoxes*, 1874 (including *The New "Examen,"* or inquiry into the evidence relating to certain passages in Lord Macaulay's *History*); Mark Pattison's article in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; *Macaulay: A Lecture*,* by Sir Richard C. Jebb (1900).

Macaulay was the pioneer and founder of that English specialty in historical writing—the style allusive. He read a library to write a sentence, and traversed a continent for a descriptive epithet, with the result, as Thackeray well put it, that you have but to take any three pages of the *Essays* or *History* and glimmering below the streams of narrative you, an average reader, will see one, two, three—half a score—allusions to other historic facts, characters, literature, poetry. "At Lincoln Cathedral," wrote Macaulay himself, "there is a beautiful painted window which was made by an apprentice out of the pieces of glass which had been rejected by his master. It is so far superior to every other in the church that, according to the tradition, the vanquished artist killed himself in mortification. Sir Walter Scott, in the same manner, has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which, even considered as histories, are scarcely less valuable than theirs. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated." Now this is exactly what Macaulay himself has done.

If Macaulay be the founder of Allusivism, the progenitor of the school of applied antiquarianism and more or less relevant anecdote, especially in relation to literary history, is no less surely Isaac D'Israeli (1766—1848), the squire of Bradenham, the Bayle of literary speculation, staunch champion of Pope, and Lord Byron's favourite contemporary author. Compiler of the well-known *Curiosities, Quarrels and Miscellanies of Literature*, and curious commentator upon *The Life and Reign of Charles I.*, D'Israeli further projected a *History of European Literature* which would doubtless have been considerably more lively than the formal, judicious, but uninspiring volumes of Hallam. For literary anecdote, with all its failings, lasts considerably better than literary sentences or even than literary verdicts, however judicially expressed.

CHAPTER VIII

SHELLEY

“For feast it is,
Though of ethereal, translunary fare,
His story who pre-eminently of men
Seemed nourished upon starbeams and the stuff
Of rainbows, and the tempest, and the foam;
Who hardly brooked on his impatient soul
The fleshly trammels; whom at last the sea
Gave to the fire, from whose wild arms the winds
Took him, and shook him broadcast to the world.”

—W. WATSON.

Early days and marriages—Italy—William Godwin—*Cenci*, *Prometheus*, and *Adonais*—Lyrics—Form and matter of his verse—Landor, Peacock, and Trelawny.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born at Field Place, near Horsham, in the weald of Sussex, on August 4th, 1792. He was the eldest son of Timothy Shelley, a fussy and consequential member of Parliament who had married in 1791 Elizabeth, daughter of James Pilfold. He was brought up with four sisters and a baby brother, but appears to have had rather less than the average of local or family affection—a peculiarity which seems invariable in persons of philanthropic tendency. But Shelley as a boy had no philanthropic tendency; he was devoted to weird and ghostly tales and to chemistry. He tried to distil spirits and to raise ghosts. At Eton he was fond of solitary walking (to Stoke Pogis especially), showed a revengeful spirit, and was by no means popular, being wholly unamenable to discipline though apt at Latin verse. His head was small, with regular features, and he wore long hair, being described rather unidentifiably as both wild and gentle, awkward and graceful. All are agreed that his voice was very shrill, and that it was distressing to hear him read aloud. He was already a bookworm, and his pockets were always stored with literature, preferably Greek. In disputation he was voluble and inventive; his recreations were country rambling, shooting with a pistol, and sailing paper boats, often freighted with halfpence. His abstraction over what he read sometimes lasted for days,

during which he subsisted on penny loaves and raisins bought at some small shop as he passed by book in hand. He was indifferent as to dress, and almost a vegetarian normally, though he broke out occasionally both in dress and diet, much to the amusement of his friends Hogg and Peacock. He first met Hogg at dinner in Hall at University College, Oxford, whither he went up in October, 1810, and Hogg's picture of his vivid personality and racing eagerness and brightness in converse is one of the gems of English biography. Bysshe's ideality was at this time ludicrously extreme. He used to curse his father for his dull reactionary views. He apparently half-seriously thought he might convince the dons of his college of the error of their ways by a boyish little demonstration he compiled on *The Necessity of Atheism*, and by an analogous process later on he tried to inculcate the duty of insurrection in Ireland. Such freaks were less discreditable than the precipitation of the dons in expelling him from the university. Their action first brought Shelley into collision with the ruthless front of prejudice and self-interest, and it made a profound impression.

He settled in Poland Street, on ill terms with his father, saw a good deal of Hogg, who had generously followed him into exile, and on the rebound from a frustrated courtship with his cousin Harriet Grove (portrayed inimitably

by Peacock in *Nightmare Abbey*) was captivated by Harriet Westbrook, the school companion of his sister Helen (Bysshe's favourite sister) at Clapham. A clever, coquettish blonde, with very pretty hair and complexion, she first became Bysshe's "little friend" (April, 1811), and then under the impression that she was a *femme incomprise*, persecuted by her relatives, she became something more; the tenderness developed rapidly, and in August, 1811, with a generosity as indiscreet as uncommon among the heirs of baronets, Shelley married his enchantress. The united age of the married pair was thirty-five. They travelled about from one romantic spot to another (Cumberland, Wales, Devon, Killarney), and Harriet, who had a passion for reading aloud, read much poetry to her husband; but she had no conception of household management—they were short of funds, and seem to have subsisted largely on *pâtisserie* and buns. A daughter, Ianthe, was born in June, 1813, a son, Charles Bysshe, some eighteen months later. In the meantime tragic events had occurred. Both the poet and his wife were perilously attractive to the opposite sex. Hogg made shameless love to Harriet, Harriet was annoyed at Shelley's indifference, and estranged from her husband from time to time by the manœuvres of her sister Eliza. Inexperience of life permitted both Hogg and Eliza to attach themselves almost permanently to the ménage of the young couple. Shelley became uncertain as to the tenure of his wife's affection. No such doubt existed in the case of Mary Godwin (*ætat* 17), whom he began to meet in May, 1814. They fell in love mutually almost at first sight. She could understand poetry and philosophy, Harriet could not. She, too, was unhappy at home with an unsympathising stepmother. Godwin himself disapproved of this mushroom passion. But at the end of July it proved too strong. Shelley and Mary ran away, left Dover for Calais in an open boat, and proceeded to Switzerland. Undeterred by the recollection of Eliza, Shelley allowed Claire, a half-sister of Mary's, to accompany them. This action (which led to unpleasant surmises and complications), in connection with his apparent confidence that Harriet might be induced to join the party, indicate a strange obliquity of common understanding in the poet at this period, and more than any incident of his life justify the nickname of "Mad Shelley" by which he was known at Eton. There may have been some morbid

physical ailment partially to explain it, for we hear much of hallucinations, of drugs, and of strange terrors (such as the fear of elephantiasis) which occasionally beset the poet. In the autumn the lovers returned, and early next year, as a consequence of the death of his grandfather, Bysshe came in for £1,000 a year, whereupon one of his first cares was to provide for an allowance to his wife. A memorable summer was spent on the Thames in the company of Peacock, and the great poet now emerges in *Lines in Lechlade Churchyard* (one of the most beautiful spots on the stripling Thames) and in *Alastor*. In 1816 they went abroad again—to Switzerland, and here it was that Byron seduced Mary's sister, who subsequently returned to fall in love with Shelley, as nearly all the women in his neighbourhood invariably did, and to cause some dissension in their circle. Towards the end of 1816 the poet heard of the suicide of his wife, and was stricken with remorse "at having brought Harriet in the first instance into an atmosphere of thought and life for which her strength of mind had not qualified her." Much happier is the saying of a much lesser but true poet:

A star look'd down from heaven and loved a flower
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour.
Let eyes that trace his orbit in the spheres
Refuse not, to a ruin'd rosebud, tears.

Shelley now married Mary Godwin. In 1818 he left England for the last time with his second wife and their son (the custody of his children by Harriet had been refused him), and the rest of his life was eventful only in the intellectual sphere—by the production of incomparable lyrics. From Leghorn, where they met the Gisbornes (Godwin's old friends), they went to the Baths of Lucca (*Rosalind and Helen*). After accompanying Claire to see her daughter Allegra, Shelley settled for a time at Byron's instance at Este (*Euganean Hills*). The same visit produced *Julian and Maddalo*. After wintering in "dejection" (due in part to an obscured attachment) at Naples, the summer of 1819 was passed at Leghorn (*Cenci* and *Prometheus*), and 1820 largely at Pisa, where the difficulties with Godwin came to a head, and some jealousy between Mary and her half-sister led to a secession of the latter. Here, too, Shelley knit an acquaintance with his second cousin, Captain Medwin, who tells us the story of the poet's platonic infatuation



From the Painting by G. Clint.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

for Emilia Viviani. The circle was enlarged by Trelawny, Edward E. Williams and his wife, and Shelley was aroused from solitary habits by a passion for boating, which these new friends shared. In 1821 he visited Byron again at Ravenna; the migration to Pisa was arranged, and the covenant made with Leigh Hunt. In May, 1822, Shelley and his friends left the Lung' Arno at Pisa for Casa Magni on the Gulf of Spezia. On May 12th a small schooner they had procured for boating was brought from Genoa (Shelley bought it for £80). On July 1st the poet and Williams put out in the *Ariel* for Leghorn to meet Leigh Hunt. A week later, after provisioning their boat, they set out on the return journey. They kept up too much sail; for, as a local mariner observed, "the devil put his tail into the weather." At 5.15 p.m., in a smart squall, the tiny vessel foundered. On July 18th the body of the poet (identified by the Sophocles and Keats in the pockets) was washed on the beach at Viareggio. Having been temporarily buried, his remains were exhumed and burned there on August 14th in the presence of Hunt, Trelawny, and Byron.

Shelley's early excursions in authorship were those of a precocious boy with a great love of literature, but no precocious faculty whatever and little promise of any special endowment at all. His first volume of verse was printed at Worthing under the title "*Original Poetry*, by Victor and Cazire" (September, 1810). Two poems are in heroic verse in what is intended for a playful Cowperian vein; these are the best in the volume, and are by the poet's sister Elizabeth ("Cazire"), aged seventeen. The remaining poems, by Shelley himself, are mostly in some kind of anapaestic measure, and are extremely poor—below the level of an ordinary provincial paper. His next published work was a romance, "*Zastrozzi, a Romance*, by P. B. S." (1810), which begins thus: "Torn from the society of all he held dear on earth, the victim of secret enemies, and exiled from happiness, was the wretched Verezzi! All was quiet; a pitchy darkness involved the face of things, when, urged by fiercest revenge, Zastrozzi placed himself at the door of the inn where, undisturbed, Verezzi slept." Not a whit less melodramatic, even more lurid, is the commencement of his next romance, "*St. Irvyne, or The Rosicrucian*, by a Gentleman of the University of Oxford" (1811): "Red thunder-clouds borne on the wings of the midnight

whirlwind, floated, at fits, athwart the crimson-coloured orbit of the moon." These crude productions reflect alike a faint image of the literature to which he was addicted as an over-grown schoolboy, mainly Chatterton, Monk Lewis, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maturin, Scott, Coleridge, and Schiller. They are worthless from a literary point of view, but interesting as representing to us the abstracted, dreamy, and phantom-haunted elf that Shelley developed into. The next stage of his growth was chemistry and logic, represented by the queer little five-page tract which he called *The Necessity of Atheism* (Worthing, February, 1811), concluding: "Every reflecting mind must allow that there is no proof of the existence of a Deity. Q.E.D." Such crudity is as astonishing as that progressive development of Shelley's mind and art which marks his kinship to Shakespeare. These early efforts—the doctrinaire absurdities in *Queen Mab* and the impulsive mistakes of his early life—are all one. After his elf-like youth, this spoilt and wayward genius had no means wherewith to achieve contact with the realities of life. He mistook his country and his age as completely as they mistook him for an atheist, revolutionary, and antinomian in grain. On the Continent, under Napoleon, he would have been shot or immured for his opinions. But in England, as the son and grandson of a county magnate with some borough influence, Shelley was treated as a lunatic.

An age which has to protect the very foundations of national existence has to depend a good deal on patriotic prejudice, and cannot afford to be nice. Complete delusion as to historical realities produced in Shelley a phosphorescence which hovered over the very wave that broke in vain against old England. Misunderstanding led to aberration, in which on the poet's side definite perceptions were merged in emotions and their resulting moods. Profoundly influenced by the classicism of Landor and Peacock, Shelley used classical myth as material for poetry in a way far beyond the range of their art. From the classical and declamatory he oscillated to a Vedic mood, and sings in the spirit of solitary places, streams, pine-forests, the sea-shore. He nourishes exotic ideals in imitation of Southey and Byron; he cultivates Hellenic, German, and Spanish poetry, gathering about him, meanwhile, Marlowe's identical hues of classic unreality, and creating

characters of the airy fabric of Ariel, devoid of flesh and blood. But meanwhile his peculiar delicacy, intuitive perception, intensity, and rapidity were generating qualities for which other poets sighed in vain. Contrast the image of Byron over his matutinal lamp with that of Shelley hanging over a pool in the forest, listening to the wailing of men in the trees, massing the rough imagery which his unrivalled faculty was to work on so unerringly and indefatigably, learning to distil that quintessence of a quintessence which, once settled in Italy, he began to pour into his lyric poetry. The imponderable "nocturnal ether" of his verse is to other poetry what that poetry

is to cold prose. We wonder sometimes if he was really a man or a mermaid, an Undine in human form who might one day return to the elements. But all this time, by a wonderful evolution, he was gaining humanity: becoming more forbearing in opinion, more controlled in sympathy, more considerate in generosity (always extreme), more sober in enthusiasm. Simultaneously he advances from melodious fancy to harmonious imagination, from exquisite sound to a deep undertone of meaning, from shadow and semblance to the most vital and inspiring realities of poetic art. To what summits might not this wonderful ascent and progress have witched him!

REVERTING to the period of his expulsion, Shelley was now just at the point at which Marlowe represents to us his Faustus in search of some intellectual organon which was to transform existence and regenerate mankind. He found the necromancer he wanted in William Godwin, a man of the type which seemed to Burke the very antithesis of reason and good sense. Yet Godwin was regarded by many as the very incarnation of philosophic profundity, and undeterred by the object-lesson in France, he himself fancied that all the evils of mankind might still be rectified by the free display and exercise of the ratiocinative faculties. Godwin was well fitted to be an apostle of reason by his remorseless faith in logical formulæ and his complete lack of humour. He works out the most startling and subversive conclusions, and propounds theses revolting to the conscience of humanity, with the calmness of a mathematician stating a proposition in Euclid. He enounces the most startling paradoxes as if they were ordinary opinions, and never seems to perceive that they involve a complete *reductio ad absurdum* of his system. This was the man whom Shelley invoked with something of the solemnity of a young archangel: "Guide thou and direct me . . . in all my weaknesses and inconsistencies bear with me. When you reprove me, reason speaks."

By February, 1813, Shelley finished his first considerable poem, *Queen Mab*, in nine sections or cantos, which he dedicated "To Harriet." It represents the first crude workings of the Godwinian philosophy upon the Pantheism of his native thought, passages of some declamatory vigour being woven into operatic nature-music, beautiful in diction, but extremely vague both in form and meaning. In *Alastor* (the Spirit of Solitude), written in 1815 in the autumn shade of Windsor Great Park, after the definite rupture with his first wife, and published in 1816 with the short pieces classed as *Early Poems*, the calibre of the poet is for the first time discernible. In a mysterious rhapsody of poetic aspiration in blank verse, the poetic energy of which seemed to derive from nothing more proximate than the first two sestias of *Hero and Leander*, the poet winged his way into the most lunar and immaterial regions of Poetry, where he henceforth took up his abode. It was followed in 1817 by the much longer *Laon and Cythna*, afterwards known as *The Revolt of Islam*, composed April–September, 1817, at Marlow, on the Thames, in twelve cantos, in Spenserian stanza, and dedicated "To Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley." Fine though much of the parable is in illustration of the Idea of Freedom, nothing comes up to the majestic allegory of the conflict between the Good and Evil Spirit, as typified by a Snake (knowledge) and an Eagle (priestly power), with which this very long poem opens. The next great production, passing by the too effervescent *Rosalind and Helen* (begun at Marlow and finished at the Baths of Lucca, 1817-18), was the deeply interesting and far more mature *Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation*, written in a pergola near the villa at Este, but dated Rome, May, 1819 (published posthumously). Shelley as usual is his own protagonist, this time as Julian; but the longest speech is a long soliloquy by the "Maniac," another avatar of the poet. The description of the Adriatic coast is supremely good, as good in its way as Crabbe describing the dunes of Suffolk. The heroic couplets are managed with a limberness which shows that in poetic technique Shelley had nothing to learn of the eighteenth century any more than of the seventeenth. No English poet has ever shown a more complete mastery of every kind of metrical resource. Some couplets are superb:

"the blue heavens were bare,
Stripp'd to their depths by the awakening north;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth."

"And I remember one remark, which then
Maddalo made: he said—'most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong:
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.'"

Shelley was now at the zenith of his power, and two masterpieces (ranking second only to certain detached

lyrics), *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*, written between Este and Leghorn—much of the *Prometheus* in the neighbourhood of the *Thermae* of Caracalla at Rome—were respectively published March and August, 1820. Shelley was probably right in thinking the *Prometheus* the best, as it was certainly the most characteristic, of his longer efforts. It represents the conflict between the conception of the Deity as a tyrannical despot and as a benevolent ameliorator and reformer, by means of the machinery of the august world-myth as Æschylus had wrought it—the background peopled in this case with a chorus of beautiful abstractions in earth, air, mountain and stream, the beautiful nymph Asia, and the like. It was selected as a theme after long dallying with the career of Tasso and the story of Job, and it represents as nothing else could the abstract and grandiose cosmic harmonies upon which Shelley so loved to train his muse. With it was published that superb demonstration in physiography and *ne plus ultra* of verbal harmony, *The Cloud*. Could Erasmus Darwin have clothed the processes of Nature in such poetic purple as this, few would have found the courage to ridicule his choice of subject-matter. *The Cenci* illustrates Shelley's versatility, for it is inspired not by Hellas, but by the Elizabethan drama of the decadence when the instrument of Shakespeare was concentrated, by Ford, Tourneur, Fletcher, and Webster, upon superhuman stories of Italian lust and Italian cruelty. The beauty and intensity of the diction, however, approach at their best (in the last scene, for instance) to the splendours of Shakespeare's middle period when he finished *All's Well*, and wrote *Julius Cæsar* and *Measure for Measure*. Shelley was twenty-six only when he finished this, the one English poetic drama comparable with Shakespeare in his prime (i.e. after 1600). Whether this comparison be just or no, it will be observed that this great effort of dramatic composition, the most poignantly human of all Shelley's writings, was followed by a *Troilus* and *Cressida* period of mocking irony, satire, and "miching mallecho." None of these efforts, neither *Peter Bell the Third* (a would-be severe travesty of Wordsworth as a renegade and a Simonides, who combined the incongruous function of flattering a tyrant and writing the most tender and beautiful lyric poetry), nor *The Masque of Anarchy*, and still less the half-boyish, half-beastly humours of *Ædipus Tyrannus*, or "Swellfoot the Tyrant," can be accounted precisely a gain either to Shelley or to English literature—or even to English political science. The poet in him took his revenge when he penned that matchless essay in familiar epistolary verse, the *Letter to Maria Gisborne*, the visionary rapture of *The Witch of Atlas*, and the tropically beautiful *Sensitive Plant*, the imaginative opulence of which is almost overpowering at first to a northern taste. It was in the summer of the blossoming of *The Sensitive Plant*, 1820, that the poet became so enraptured with Emilia Viviani, the daughter of an Italian count, whose youthful stepmother had relegated her to a convent pension in the suburbs of Pisa, pending the arrival of a suitable husband. To this sylph-like beauty, of uncommon intellect, immured in so romantic a prison, Shelley addressed that mystical romance of platonic love to which he gave the symbolical title of *Epipsychidion*. That the metaphysical portion remains unintelligible to those who have not assimilated the spirit of Plato's *Symposium* and Dante's *Vita Nuova* is indisputable. The incongruity of these ideal elements with the most beautiful and concrete peroration, in which the poet summons his affinity to fly with him to an island in the blue Ægean, described with colours that befit the home of Prospero and Ariel, is as unquestionably baffling. Shelley partially explains when he disclaims the accents of flesh and blood, and despairs of success in attempting to clothe an eternal quest of an Ideal Love in the likeness of a mortal image. Success was so far attained that English rhymed heroic metre has no more exquisite example to show than the last 200 verses of *Epipsychidion*. The twenty-ninth year of this miracle of thirty summers produced two further blossoms, both of the topmost bough of lyrical poetry: a monody which ranks with *Lycidas*, *In Memoriam*, and *Thyrsis* as one of the greatest in the language—we refer of course to the *Adonais*, in which he laments the death of Keats ("the least imperfect of my compositions"), second to none in artistic harmony and beauty, but abstract and wanting in human sympathy far beyond *Lycidas* itself; and then *Hellas*, an "improvise," as Shelley calls it, though it contains a lyric movement of the loftiest rhythmical invention, and two of the most exquisite lyrics that even Shelley wrote—"Worlds on worlds are rolling ever" and "The world's great age begins anew."

This brings us to the spring of 1822, by which time Shelley had practically completed his poetic work, though it remained in large part unpublished, and he looked upon himself as having failed. The failure of the "enlightened public" to recognise his *Adonais* set the seal to his disappointment. If this could excite no interest, what incentive could he have to write? Only the hope of earning £100 to give away (to Hunt), and even that was denied him. He complains of the impossibility of composing without the excitement of some hope, at least of sympathy—and of this sympathy he had come almost to despair. In private life, too, he had continued to meet with misfortune, and his character still stood blackened and traduced in the eyes of the world. His life with Mary had been a happy one on the whole, but it is plain that he felt a lack of perfect sympathy. A certain coldness was often perceptible, and she was given not infrequently to something like fault-finding with him because of his persistent differences from the world and its ways. Above all, his inveterate tendency to idealise all the women with whom he came in contact and their inevitable tendency to become an adoring choir round the poet obtruded a barrier of almost chronic jealousy between Shelley and his second wife. To Shelley's continued loneliness under these conditions must be ascribed the deep melancholy of his verses to Mrs. Williams. Unlike his verses in celebration of Jane Clairmont or Emilia Viviani, the verses which he wrote to her were kept secret from Mary.

As a lyric poet it seems impossible that Shelley should be surpassed; he has achieved such *tours de force* with metres and rhymes and rhythms that they constitute a standard to themselves—the melody and beauty of diction of such passages as—

"I wield the flail of the lashing hail
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain
And laugh as I pass in thunder;"

or—

"All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As when night is bare
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd;"

or—

"And the rose like a nymph to the bath address,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air
The soul of her beauty and love lay bare;"

or again—

"Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies
As the flames of sacrifice. . . ."
"The wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray;
And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day."

A number, again, of minute gems of lyric verse culminating in such marvels as :

"Music when soft voices die;"
or
"Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years."

Phrases such as "olive-sandall'd Apennine," "love's sad satiety," or "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought," or antistrophes of such perfectly sustained beauty as that of Asia in *Prometheus Unbound* :

"My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing. . . ."

The deep sense of the mystery of words, and their lightest variations in the skein of poetry, which had been half-forgotten since Milton's time, had been recovered in a great measure by Coleridge and Wordsworth since 1798; Lamb, too, and Hazlitt, and even Southey and Hunt to some extent, had shown that they were in the secret, while Keats had its "open sesame" on his lips ere he died. The union of poetic emotion with verbal music of the greatest perfection was increasingly felt to be the intimate aim of poetry. But none of these masters combined these pre-requisites with quite the same effect of spontaneous ease or variety of complex melody, which Shelley appeared to attain so wholly without effort. It is, perhaps, this spontaneous harmony which renders his lyric poems so ethereal, so entrancing, and so unapproachable.

Shelley's eye, it has been well said, was a prism to all the radiant colouring of verbal imagery. For teaching a direct moral or lesson in the manner of the rational age, such imagery is not much more helpful than a sketch of Turner's as a means of identifying some familiar site or landscape. But Shelley continually fires a train of idealism in even the most sluggish imagination, and his influence as an *animatore* is scarcely less perceptible in the fine texture of his prose letters than in the more elaborate warp and woof of his lyrical poetry. When Shelley laid hold upon a beautiful idea, he cherished it and clung to it: it became part of his life, and he passed it again through the prism of his mind. First he would give it utterance in some letter of choice and intimate outpouring to the Gisbornes, to Hunt, or to Peacock, and next we find it interwoven with conceptions of like beauty through the musical stanzas of some exquisite poem. This unity of material, if possible, enhances the value of Shelley's letters. They cannot be divorced from the poems: each is the complement of the other. Reading them together we discover how he idealised and clothed in radiant verse the perceptions and experiences of everyday life; how by the alchemy of his genius he transmuted the substance and matter of his storm-tost, restless, solitary life into a poem. Idealist that he was, he knew no distinction between the common realities of his ordinary life and the higher things that were a part of his poet nature.

During his last four years this most lovable of men was becoming gradually riper, wiser, truer to his highest instincts. The imperfections of his youth were being rapidly absorbed—his character mellowing, his genius growing stronger. Most exquisite of artists in verse, the poetic harp was with him but a means to a religious end. The first obligation to his mind was to fight against the hydra of evil in some endeavour to mitigate the woes of the human race. It is quite possible to conceive that the unrivalled faculties of his maturity might have been devoted to grafting some new religion upon the old stock already in possession of humanity, or even to some political championship of a rectified justice. In the divine gifts of hope and love of humanity he stands alone in the realm of modern art. Unless the doctrine of aristocracy should reassert itself, which seems improbable, he will doubtless be canonised as one of the prime spirits of altruism and slave-emancipation.

Among the primary influences of Shelley's life must be reckoned Landor (whose *Gebir* he studied incessantly) and T. L. Peacock, the constant associate of the epocal summer of 1815. Peacock has left in the pages of *Fraser* a vigorous pastel of Shelley in those early days. In life-likeness this is only surpassed by the early portrait of T. J. Hogg, and the most striking representation of all in the classic pages of E. J. Trelawny (*Recollections of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*).

Walter Savage Landor was born at Warwick on January 30th, 1775 (the year of Charles Lamb's birth). He was the son of an eminently respectable physician at Warwick, who had married into the squirearchy and indulged in that luxury for a working doctor, a choleric temper, which he duly transmitted to his son. Eldest son by the second heiress his father married, Landor was himself heir to maternal estates at Ipsley Court and Tachbrook, in Warwickshire. He was rusticated first from Rugby and then from Trinity College, Oxford, on absurdly inadequate grounds, but his insubordinate temper really afforded the authorities no choice. His youthful Jacobinism proved more than his father could stomach, and in 1794 he left home, took lodgings in London, and consoled himself, as was his wont, by writing Latin verses. These he published with some English heroics and odes, imitations from Catullus, and a *Latine Scribendi Defensio* early in 1795, under the title of *The Poems of Walter Savage Landor* (Cadell). It was arranged eventually that the young man should have an allowance of £150 a year, and with this he made himself at home in South Wales, chiefly at Tenby and Swansea, where his peregrinations led to his intimacy with Rose Aylmer and the production of his *Gebir*, a blank-verse poem suggested by a so-called Arabian Romance of Clara Reeve, published in 1798. Coleridge, Southey, and De Quincey were among the first of the few who recognised the formal beauty and linear purity of Landor's verse structure. He continued to write verse almost to his last week of life, but he was always better at epigrams and occasional pieces than at more sustained efforts, and he recognised himself that verse was to him the amusement of an amateur, prose was his "study and business." *Gebir* is chiefly remarkable perhaps for the profound way in which the influence of Milton is felt throughout it. Milton had already become the idol of Landor's idolatry, and *Paradise Lost* a sacred temple unrivalled in the realms of poetry. South Wales, the home of his Ianthe and Ione, remained his headquarters, but he was also at Bath, Hatton, near Warwick, where he visited Dr. Parr, Brighton, and Oxford, where he went to set on foot the printing of a Latin version of *Gebir*. His father had to sell some property to meet debts which he incurred. The father died at the end of 1805, and Landor, succeeding at thirty to the family estates, set up at Bath with a fine carriage, three horses and two menservants. His dissipations at Bath were interrupted by three months' volunteering with the English force in Galicia, upon the outbreak of a Spanish national resistance to Napoleon at Oviedo, and the experience prompted the tragedy of *Count Julian* (1811), which De Quincey ranked with *Æschylus* and Southey with infinite difficulty persuaded Murray to bring out (at the author's expense).

Landor now purchased a considerable estate at Llanthony Abbey, in Monmouthshire, and lavished sixty or seventy thousand pounds, it is said, in developing the estate, building, and planting (importing thousands of cedar cones from Lebanon for this last purpose). His action is always somewhat suggestive of a Caligula reincarnated as a prize-fellow of a small college. In the spring of 1811 he went to a ball in Bath, and seeing a pretty girl, remarked to a friend, "That's the nicest girl in the room, and I'll marry her." He married her accordingly (May, 1811), it is said, "for her wonderful golden hair, and because she was penniless and without accomplishments." It is small reproach to any woman that she did not possess sufficient tact, charm, and intelligence to suit Landor. "He demanded beauty in woman just as imperatively as honesty in man, yet was hardly submissive to its influence." At any rate, Mrs. Landor and the lion were ill-mated. A night came when Landor found himself unable to live with his wife any longer. He got up before daybreak (they were in Jersey), walked across the island, and embarked for France.

After vicissitudes not a few, he settled at Fiesole, in the villa still shown as Landor's. There after some experimenting he hit upon the form of prose dialogue of which he was to become in English a solitary master. The *Imaginary Conversation* belongs as absolutely to Landor as does the imaginary monologue to Browning. In clearness, calmness, and precision the *Conversations* are thoroughly classical and Landorian, but they vary very much between dramatic movement and meditation, inspiration and tedium. Upon the whole they are rarely impersonations of the characters, but rather of Landor, always Landor, whose opinions turn about and change their pace, but always seem to be marking time. Too often they seem "interminable"—very different from his short lyrical fragments which a late generation cherishes as "imperishable." He died at Florence on September 17th, 1864.

"A tall man with grey hair and large fierce-rolling eyes: of the most restless, impetuous vivacity, not to be held in by the most perfect breeding—expressing itself in high-coloured superlatives, indeed in reckless

exaggeration; now and then in a hyena laugh, not of sport but of mockery; a wild man whom no extent of culture has been able to tame! His intellectual faculty seemed to be weak in proportion to the violence of temper; the judgment he gives about anything is more apt to be wrong than right—as the inward whirlwind shows him this side or the other of the object; and *sides* of an object are all he sees. He is not an original man; in most cases one but sighs over the spectacle of commonplace torn to rags.” So Carlyle writes of Landor with his diabolic force of insight, though here, as Mr. Robertson points out, the projectile recoils with a truly deadly force upon the hand that launched it.

More justly than Landor even may Thomas Love Peacock be defined as an *evadé romantique*. A London merchant's son, born October 18th, 1785, at Weymouth, Tom was always a favourite of his maternal grandfather, Captain Love, and of his excellent schoolmaster at Englefield Green. A natural scholar, apt at language, with a most retentive memory, and a bright, curly head, he was a universal favourite. Wandering about in his favourite scenery of the Thames and North Wales, his life was almost as aimless as that of one of his heroes, until, at the age of twenty-seven, he met Shelley on his favourite river, and Shelley, in the process of fabricating *Alastor*, taught him by demonstration that he, Peacock, was not a true poet. His Hippocrene flows as witty as it is clear in a few of those delightful songs which irradiate his novels, but it is the novels or conversation-pieces, with a thread of light, live fiction running through them, that make Peacock the unique personality he is in our literature. Peacock was not, primarily, a student of characters, but rather of humours, as they fly in the comedy of Aristophanes, Jonson, Molière, Congreve, and Sheridan. He loved high comedy himself (he took the reluctant Shelley once to see *The School for Scandal*), and he threw his satirical observations upon life into its mould. His favourite convention was a kind of Tournament of Cranks, as in *Headlong Hall*, *Melincourt* (1817), *Nightmare Abbey* (1819), the inimitable *Crotchet Castle* (1831), and *Gryll Grange* (1860), with occasional excursions into a kind of fantastic mediæval pantomime or burlesque, interspersed with exquisite descriptions and songs, in *Maid Marian* (1822) and *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829). In 1856 Peacock, who in one phase of his early life had depended on Shelley's bounty, retired from a distinguished term (thirty-six years) of service at the India House, and settled in retirement at Halliford, on his beloved Thames, a crusted hedonist and most optimistic Tory, hating with equal fervour radicals, economists, Scots, Americans, railway travellers and telegraphists. His critical range was certainly narrow and his intellectual temper not a little irritable. Thus his attacks on Coleridge (Flosky) and Southey (Sackbut) or the *Edinburgh* reviewers make little pretence to fairness. But, even where least fair, his ridicule has an extraordinary modern ring about it, as where, for instance, he says that if you put the nonsense talked about education in one scale of the balance and all other nonsense in the other, this last will kick the beam. The fact is that Peacock's wit was of a very high order and that he was prepared to make the usual sacrifices to it. Pagan though he was, he identified himself mainly with those shameless but delightful epicures who do the clerical duty in his novels, Dr. Folliott and Dr. Opimian. Robert Buchanan, the ballad-writer, remembered him well—a stately old gentleman with hair as white as snow, a keen merry eye and a characteristic chin. His dress was plain black, with white neckcloth and low shoes, and on his head he wore a plaited straw hat. One glance at him was enough to reveal his character, that of his own delightful Dr. Opimian. His tastes, in fact, were four: a good library, a good dinner, a pleasant garden, and rural walks. His influence has been considerable on literary writers, and no prose writer of his time, and no constructor of dialogues, has ever surpassed him either in the sparkling vivacity or almost faultless brilliance of his prose style. He died at Halliford in 1866.

Peacock committed his recollections of Shelley to two papers in his favourite *Fraser* (June, 1858, and January, 1860). The *Recollections* of E. J. Trelawny make an even more striking record of the last days of Shelley and Byron, rich in romantic glimpses and impressions: not perhaps quite fair to Byron or to Mary Shelley (against both of whom he nourished grievances), but showing genuine insight into the sprite-like disposition of Bysshe. Trelawny's other books are of no value. He lived on, a scowling, masterful old man (the original of the harsh-visaged mariner in Millais's "North-west Passage," a figure that challenges comparison with Whistler's "Carlyle"), and died in the same year with two kindred spirits, Thomas Carlyle and George Borrow, in 1881.

The vast and growing fabric of Shelley literature is based upon the following foundation: Mrs. Shelley's Prefaces and Notes to the *Poems* of 1824 and 1839; Leigh Hunt's *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries* (1828, *Autobiography*); T. J. Hogg's article on "Shelley" in *The New Monthly Magazine* (1832, reissued 1858); Medwin's *Life of Shelley* (1847); Middleton's *Shelley and his Writings* (1858); Trelawny's *Recollections** (1858 and 1878); T. L. Peacock's *Memoirs* in *Fraser* (1858 and 1860); *Shelley Memorials*, ed. Lady Shelley (1862); Garnett's *Relics of Shelley* (1862); W. M. Rossetti's *Memoir* (1870 and 1885). To which may be added the biographical and critical studies of McCarthy, Jeaffreson, Rabbe, W. Graham, Biagi (*Last Days*), H. S. Salt (*Shelley Primer*), Edgar, Richter, Chevrillon (*Nature Study*), Stopford Brooke, J. M. Robertson, A. A. Jack, and, above all, the elaborate Biography of Prof. Dowden, 2 vols., 1886 (see *Quarterly Review*, April, 1887, and Dowden's answer, *Athenæum*, May 14th, 1887). The best editions of Shelley's *Poems* are W. M. Rossetti's, 3 vols. (1870 and 1878); Forman's (2 vols., 1882, and 5 vols., 1892); Clarendon Press* (1904 and 1905). Colvin's *Selections from Landor* in the Golden Treasury Series (1882), is notable for its discussion of the distinction in meaning between Classic and Romantic. For Landor, see also Lord Houghton, Swinburne (*Miscellanies*), and Lowell (*Latest Essays*, 1891).‡

CHAPTER IX

JOHN KEATS

"I weep for Adonais—he is dead."—SHELLEY.

"From the height to which the genius of Keats arose during the brief period between its first effervescence and its exhaustion—from the glowing humanity of his own nature and the completeness with which, by the testimony alike of his own consciousness and his friends' experience, he was accustomed to live in the lives of others—from the gleams of true greatness of mind which shine not only in his poetry, but equally amid the gossip and pleasantries of his family letters—from all our evidences, in a word, as to what he was as well as from what he did, I think it probable that by power, as well as by temperament and by aim, he was the most Shakespearean spirit that has lived since Shakespeare: the true Marcellus, as his first biographer has called him, of the realm of English song; and that in his premature death our literature has sustained its greatest loss."—COLVIN'S *Keats*.

Æsthetic philosophy—John Keats—School and surgery—First poems—*Endymion* and the reviewers—*La Belle Dame sans Merci*—Hellenic and romantic influence—The great odes—Beauty is truth.

THAT philosophy, or artistic faith, which is commonly called *æsthetic*, and has for its fundamental axiom, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," might well have found its source in the teachings of William Blake. It is, however, from the youngest of the poets of the Romantic Revival (Tennyson, Hood, Rossetti, Morris cannot be said to belong to a *revival* stage of Romanticism) that nineteenth-century æstheticism really sprang. "Keats, as a writer . . . was more intensely and exclusively poetical than any other," said "Barry Cornwall"; and, indeed, the distinguishing trait in Keats, among the other poets of the Romantic Revival, is that he was the most exclusively—one hesitates to add *intensely*—a poet of them all; that, in the main, he essayed neither to enforce lessons nor to satirise, neither to inculcate, incidentally or otherwise, religion and morals, nor to further liberty. Holding that beauty and truth are in some way interdependent, and desirable for their own sakes, Keats wrote above all to create things of beauty, which might console by reason of their beauty, and because he "could not exist without . . . eternal poetry." Right or wrong, some such ideal forms a phase which in the arts is continually on the rise or wane; and there is no doubt but it entered into the inspiration of all the Romantic Revivalists. The historical position of Keats is that he

carried the ideal farthest, held it most consciously, and acted upon it most wholeheartedly; that he "travell'd in the realms of gold" with fewest impedimenta.

Equally noteworthy is his independence of such powerful contemporaries as the Lake Poets, and Shelley and Byron, all of whom were writing before Keats began his poetical career. The reviewers treated him as a *protégé* of Leigh Hunt's, as a member of the "Cockney School." It was Leigh Hunt, above all, who stimulated and confirmed his desire to become a poet, excited his interest in Dante and the Italian poets by what the "Ebony" wits called "the smutty poem of *Rimini*," provided him with the necessary poetical *milieu*, praised his poems in *The Examiner*, and set a mark on much of his early work. So far Keats can be included in the Cockney School; he certainly was not what Byron called him, "a tadpole of the Lakes." But he cannot properly be assigned to any school of his time; for even Leigh Hunt's poetical influence was unfruitful compared with his literary guidance in introducing the young poet to the older English and Italian writers—and, consequently, in exposing him to *their* influences. Far more than by any contemporary, and with singular directness, Keats was influenced by the *Æneid* and by other classics in translation; by the suggestions of a

Classical Dictionary; by Spenser, Chatterton, Shakespeare, and Milton—these four especially; by Chaucer, Dryden, Coleridge, and Dante. Thus, he was descended from many great forerunners rather than held a place in any single line of descent; and it is truest to say that his poetic school is the one which he himself founded, and at the head of which he stands.

John Keats, born at the Swan and Hoop Livery Stables, Finsbury, on October 31st, 1795, was the eldest son of Thomas Keats, a young West-Countryman who had found his way to the Swan and Hoop, and who may be said to have made his fortune in London, since he married his master's daughter, Frances Jennings, and became manager of his master's stables. In 1804, when the family had been increased by the births of George, Tom, and Fanny, Thomas Keats was killed by the fall of his horse in the City Road. The year before John Keats and his brother George had been sent to school at Enfield (kept by Cowden Clarke's father), where John's "pugnacity and generosity of disposition—in passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter"—his "extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty," his daring and freedom from any kind of meanness, made a popular boy of the future poet. But in this high-spirited schoolboy, with a "terrier courage" and delight in fighting, there developed with remarkable suddenness an equal or greater delight in reading. He read even at meals, we are told; and gained prizes for voluntary work—Latin and French translation.

He must in those last months have exhausted the school library. . . . The books, however, that were his constantly recurrent sources of attraction were Tooke's *Pantheon*, Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*, which he appeared to learn, and Spence's *Polymetis*. This was the store whence he acquired his intimacy with the Greek mythology; here was he "suckled in that creed outworn"; for his amount of classical attainment extended no farther than the *Aeneid*. . . . In my mind's eye I now see him at supper (we had our meals in the schoolroom) sitting back on the form, from the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's *History of his Own Time* between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it.—COWDEN CLARKE.

His poetic life began, indeed, at the time when he found his way into the world of books, and had the opportunity of reading his school-master's copies of Leigh Hunt's *Examiner*. Towards the end of his school-days, the death of his mother, who had long been ailing and whom

he had nursed with a woman's care, filled him with grief. Later in the same year (1810) he left school to be apprenticed to Mr. Hammond, a surgeon of Edmonton. Much, or probably most, of his time was still occupied by reading, for his work must have been light, and books of poetry are not less portable than books about medicine. In 1814, Cowden Clarke, whom he still visited at Enfield, lent him a copy of *The Faerie Queene*, and "he went through it like a young horse turned into a spring meadow—ramping"; and it must have been soon afterwards that he wrote his first known poem, *The Imitation of Spenser*, which, though not particularly good either as poetry or as an imitation, has yet a decided foretaste of the luxuriant imagery characteristic of Keats. After a quarrel with Hammond, the apprenticeship was brought to an end, and in 1814 Keats took lodgings in the Borough—"a beastly place in dirt, turnings and windings"—for the purpose of studying at Guy's Hospital. Through Cowden Clarke he came, during the spring of 1816, to know Leigh Hunt, who afterwards wrote:

We became intimate on the spot, and I found the young poet's heart as warm as his imagination. We read and walked together, and used to write verses of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left unnoticed by us, or unenjoyed; from the recollection of the bards and patriots of old, to the luxury of a summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter-time.

A sonnet, interesting as showing the trend of the young poet's thoughts, and the first poem of his to be published, appeared in *The Examiner* of May 5th, 1816:

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep—
Nature's observatory. . . .

So far Keats had persisted in the study of medicine, in which he was not unsuccessful, though we may well believe that his whole enthusiasm was claimed by poetry. This year, however, the amateur of poetry became the poet, was accepted as such by his increasing circle of friends, and wrote that sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, which, said Leigh Hunt, "terminates with so energetic a calmness, and which completely announced the new poet taking possession." Later in the same year, at Leigh Hunt's, he met Haydon,¹ the

¹ For an excellent account of Haydon and his *Autobiography*, see George Paston's *Sidelights*.



From the Painting by Holman Hunt.

Isabella or the Pot of Basil.

"Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet."

—KEATS.

painter of huge historical canvases, who "was amazingly interested by his prematurity of intellectual and poetical power," and who, whatever may have been his impetuous faults, had truly what Keats called "a jealousy for good." No one could better have fostered and quickened the ideals of the poet. It must have been about this time that Keats wrote *Sleep and Poetry*, containing his early poetic faith and his passionate repudiation (including that depreciation of Pope which so angered Byron) of the eighteenth-century *ars poetica*:

Yes, a schism

Nurtured by foppery and barbarism,
Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories: with a puling infant's force
They sway'd about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bar'd its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? . . .

—No, they went about,

Holding a poor, decrepit standard out
Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large
The name of one Boileau!

In March, 1817, was published the little volume, "*Poems*, by John Keats," dedicated to Leigh Hunt. Hunt reviewed it in *The Examiner* with a rare union of perspective, critical judgment, and friendly appreciation; with a foreknowledge, be it said, that intimate acquaintance with Keats, rather than the poems themselves, must have given him. Epistles and poems "To" various people predominate. The rich vocabulary and overflowing fancy of Keats are evident; but artistic control and the higher imaginative powers are somewhat wanting; whilst philosophy and deep humanity are for the most part aspirations only. With the exception of the sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, the substantive value of the book is inconsiderable. Regarded, however, in reference to later work, its value is great. No poet has more definitely stated his aims at the outset of his career. In *Sleep and Poetry*, which, besides being the finest of the longer poems, is, in effect, a summary of the rest, Keats takes up his position; shows what manner of man he is, his loves, hates, hopes, and ideals. "Here is a young poet giving himself up to his

own impressions, and revelling in real poetry for its own sake," said Leigh Hunt. That, exactly, is the spectacle which the young poet provides. The result was to come.

In April, 1817, Keats declined (for the sake of poetic independence) an invitation from Shelley, and, following the advice of his brothers and Haydon, retired to the Isle of Wight to be "alone to improve himself," to write a poem on *Endymion*, and for the preservation of "true Jack Health." But unwholesome food and the loneliness of the place overcame him. "By this means, in a week or so," he told Leigh Hunt, "I became not over-capable in my upper stories, and set off pell-mell for Margate." There, and at Canterbury, he had with him his brother Tom, whose health was failing. At the beginning of the summer he returned to London and took lodgings at Well Walk, Hampstead. John Hamilton Reynolds introduced him to Charles Armitage Brown, who was to prove a good friend, and to Benjamin Bailey, with whom Keats stayed at Oxford during the long vacation of 1817. All along, in spite of Tom's health and harassing money troubles, Keats continued to work on *Endymion*; at Oxford, according to Bailey, his speed of composition was regularly about fifty lines a day. He returned to Hampstead in May, the month after the publication of *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, "the stretched metre of an antique song," inscribed to the memory of Thomas Chatterton. *Isabella, or The Pot of Basil*, begun early in the year—the first and last of Keats's contributions to a projected series of poetical tales after Boccaccio¹—was finished in April. George Keats, before emigrating to America, was about to marry Georgiana Augusta Wylie—the object also of John's chivalrous admiration at a time when he had "a tendency to class women . . . with roses and sweetmeats." Keats and Brown saw them off from Liverpool in June, and then proceeded on a walking tour through the Lakes and Scotland, with a short expedition to the north-east of Ireland. But bad food, mainly consisting of unpalatable oat-cakes, smoky cottages, fatigue, and exposure, so weakened Keats that a cold caught in the Isle of Mull developed into an ulcerated throat. In August he returned to London by boat, quite unfit to meet the sorry state of affairs at home. The

¹ It is interesting to contrast Dryden's treatment of similar tales. The difference of tone is as great as that between *ottava rima* and heroic couplet.

Cockney School article had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, and—far sadder for Keats—his brother Tom was dying. Next month, moreover, *The Quarterly Review* added its cavilling critique to the ridicule of *Blackwood's*. These reviews were prosy, rancorous, and partisan to a degree fortunately rare, even among the battues of young poets to which the quarterlies have periodically treated their subscribers: they show us Lockhart and Croker at their very worst.

It is as well, however, to be fair to the reviewers. Keats, in the published preface to *Endymion*, said that the reader "must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished." *The Quarterly* took him at his word, yet not without observing "a certain degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way." It accused him of allowing his thoughts to be suggested by the rhymes, and with some amount of reason. Keats was not "snuffed out by an article," though he may, indeed, have been incited thereby to a strenuousness greater than his health could support. "My own domestic criticism," he wrote to his publisher, "has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or *The Quarterly* could possibly inflict. . . . 'J. S.' [who anonymously protested against *The Quarterly* in a letter to *The Morning Chronicle*] is perfectly right in regard to the slip-shod *Endymion*." The upshot of the matter is, not that the reviewers were altogether wrong, but that, from political animus, they condemned excessively. The story is, in fact, so overlain with scenes of luscious beauty that it becomes well-nigh indistinguishable. Though the poem contains pieces of exceptional loveliness, like the *Hymn to Pan* that Wordsworth, somewhat superciliously, called "a pretty piece of paganism," it has on the whole a monotony of beauty, an over-plus of sweet sentiment *et præterea nihil*. One may lie for a very long time on a bank in some lovely sylvan spot, calmed by the hum of the insects in general; but at length it is more than likely that the best part of one's attention will be devoted to mosquitoes. So it is with the 4,050 lines of *Endymion*. The useless archaisms and neologisms, the prettinesses and frequent lapses from the key become too evident. "In *Endymion* I leaped headlong into the sea, and

thereby became better acquainted with the soundings, the quicksands, and the rocks than if I had stayed upon the green shore, and piped a silly pipe, and took tea and comfortable advice," wrote Keats; and therein lies the importance of the poem, which is, in fine, less an achievement than a revolt, a worthy attempt of very great promise.

In October, 1818, Keats wrote to his brother and sister-in-law:

I shall in a short time write to you, as far as I know, how I intend to pass my Life—I cannot think of these things now, Tom is so unwell and weak. Notwithstanding your Happiness and your recommendation, I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful Creature were waiting for me at the end of a Journey or a Walk; though the Carpet were of Silk, the Curtains of the morning Clouds . . . I should not feel—or rather, my Happiness would not be so fine, as my Solitude is sublime. . . . The roaring of the wind is my wife, and the Stars through the window-pane are my Children. . . . These things, combined with the opinion I have of the generality of women—who appear to me as children, to whom I would rather give a sugar Plum than my time, form a barrier against Matrimony which I rejoice in.

In December Tom Keats died, and John, unnerved by watching and grief, went to live with Charles Armitage Brown. About the end of the year (1818), writing again to America, he said:

Mrs. Brawne, who took Brown's house for the Summer, still resides in Hampstead—she is a very nice woman—and her daughter senior is, I think, beautiful and elegant, graceful, silly, fashionable, and strange—we have a little tiff now and then—and she behaves a little better, or I must have sheered off.

In the same letter he gives a merciless analysis of Miss Brawne's charms, and adds: "But she is ignorant—monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions, calling people such names—that I was forced lately to make use of the term *Minx*. . . ." In spite of this, however, he was at the beginning of July, 1819, writing to Fanny Brawne:

I have never known any unalloy'd Happiness for many days together: the death or sickness of some one has always spoilt my hours—and now when none such troubles oppress me, it is, you must confess, very hard that another sort of pain should haunt me. Ask yourself, my love, whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom. . . . Though I could centre my Happiness in you, I cannot expect to engross your heart so entirely. . . . I must live upon hope and Chance.

A painful and disastrous love it was that began thus. As time went on, the state of Keats's health gave him small reason for hope; and chance did not intervene. One cannot help thinking, too, that in Fanny Brawne he tried to find a substitute for his dead brother, who, on the authority of George Keats, understood him better than any one else, and that she disappointed him. Whose ever the fault, she was truly to him *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. It is possible, indeed, that the Knight in *La Belle Dame sans Merci*—written about the time when the intoxication of his love was overcoming his resistance—is Keats; that the poem is autobiographical—and prophetic! His passion was consuming in its power, savage even in its intensity, but daily as his desire grew, so its fulfilment receded. Hence the rapture and misery, jealousy and humility, to be found in his letters; and hence cries like the *Sonnet to Fanny Brawne*—a poem hysterical enough as it stands, and imperfect, yet no less than tragic as painting the despair of a mind distracted by powerful opponent forces, and as the wild expression of a spirit become, through the enmity of Fate, "a fever of itself."

During the whole of 1819 Keats was declining in health, happy only at times, and tormented by his almost hopeless passion for Fanny Brawne; in February, 1820, an attack of hæmorrhage from the lungs warned him of the approach of death. It was, nevertheless, mainly during 1819 that he wrote that small quantity of poetry—the volume of 1820, and a few posthumously published poems like *La Belle Dame sans Merci* and the *Ode on Indolence*—which forms the "famous gradus" he desired, "ad Parnassum altissimum." The same year at Shanklin he wrote, in collaboration with Brown, a tragedy in five acts, *Otho the Great*, and began a play on the subject of King Stephen. But though *Otho* has a beauty of versification and a dramatic power sufficient for a first attempt, Keats was equally denied seeing Macready as Ludolph and the "writing of a few fine plays—his greatest ambition—when he did feel ambitious." Two fragments written at the end of 1819, the recast of *Hyperion* (as *The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream*) and *The Cap and Bells*, a curious satire having the flippancy, without the wit, of *Don Juan*, only too surely evince the decline of his art. The record of 1820 is mostly concerned with Fanny Brawne, and with the vacillating hopes that

are proverbially characteristic of consumptives. In July Keats wrote to his sister: "My Physician tells me I must contrive to pass the Winter in Italy"; in August, to Taylor: "This journey to Italy wakes me at daylight every morning and haunts me horribly. I shall endeavour to go through with it, though it be with the sensation of marching up against a battery." Another invitation from Shelley (to go to Pisa) was refused. On September 18th, accompanied by Joseph Severn, the painter, he set out from the Thames, and after a distressing passage, due to head winds in the Channel and a gale in the Bay of Biscay, reached Naples at the beginning of October. For a time before embarking he had been unable to bear the sight of Fanny Brawne. He wrote off the Isle of Wight:

The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible—the sense of darkness coming over me—I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my ears. Is there another life? Shall I awake and find this all a dream? There must be; we cannot be created for this sort of suffering. . . .

In November he moved from Naples to the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, and sank there during three months, tenderly nursed by Severn. "I feel the flowers growing over me," he more than once said to the doctor, and proposed as his epitaph, "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." On February 23rd, 1821, Keats died at Rome, and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery near the Pyramid of Caius Cestius, where the remains of Shelley, his elegist in *Adonais*, were also laid.

The lachrymose illusion, traceable in the main to Shelley and Byron, that Keats was directly killed by the reviewers, is now pretty well extinguished. He owned, himself, to "a horrid morbidity of temperament," an excessive sensibility; yet it is probable that a stronger body might adequately have supported what was *for him* too great an activity of mind and senses; that it was his constitution, rather than his temperament, which was tainted with the fatal morbidity. However much the throes of imaginative creation, his inattention to health until it was too late, unhappiness, and thwarted passion may have predisposed him for disease or have hastened his decline; there is no doubt that the only direct cause of his early death was an inherited and possibly inevitable consumption. A sage, if paradoxical, observation

on the poetical, and his own, character is to be found in one of Keats's letters :

As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member ; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime ; which is a thing *per se*, and stands alone), it is not itself—it has no self—it is everything and nothing ; it has no character—it enjoys light and shade ; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen.

Since all the several facets of Keats's character are to be seen only in his poems and letters, the latter very incomplete till recently ; and since, of course, his character has been reshaped and redecorated to fit a variety of ethical codes, many of them too simple for a much less complex microcosm ; for these reasons, most diverse judgments on, and apologies for, Keats have succeeded in showing cause for their existence. Against effeminacies and swooning luxuriousness we may set the brotherly care in his letters to his sister ; against his depressions when he spoke so unreservedly, his steady and long-continued effort to be cheerful, his amusing nonsense-

poems. He may over-much have wrapped himself in his own imaginings, yet said Reynolds, "He was the sincerest friend, the most lovable associate, the deepest listener to the griefs and distresses of all around him. . . ." The undeviating nature of his poetic enthusiasm, the intensity of his love for Fanny Brawne—"Upon my soul, I have loved you to the extreme"—are unquestionable. We may conceive his character as made up of many strata, some good, some bad, all fascinating. The bed-rock of a man's character is likely to be reached when he is *in extremis* ; and on reading Keats's words—

Severn—I—lift me up—I am dying—I shall die easy ; don't be frightened—be firm, and thank God it has come—

one cannot but feel that he was essentially brave and manly. Nay, his effeminacies are often such only in expression, and his frequent regrets are virile in their force. Once more we have evidence that, be genius ever so wayward, there is always, whether or no it is plainly apparent, a greatness of spirit somewhere below the waywardness.

THE extraordinary unfolding of Keats's art, which, after the volume of 1817 and *Endymion*, could produce that wonderful blossom of 1820 (the Odes, *Lamia*, *Isabella*, or *The Pot of Basil*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, *Hyperion*, etc.), has often been remarked on, but has never been explained, nor, perhaps, ever can be. When natural development, the study of Dryden which chastened *Lamia*, and the Miltonic largeness and sonorousness of *Hyperion*, have each been taken into account, there still remains a giving of life to what previously was but Greek lore, and the interfusion of Greek, mediæval, Elizabethan, and modern influences, to produce wholly original poetry of a very high order. The earlier poems of Keats show a revel of sensuous feeling ; felicity of language is too much mingled with infelicity, vagueness, redundancies, and errors of tone ; the myth of *Endymion* is treated in a manner far more Elizabethan in its poetic licence than Greek. Keats was a master of the Classical Dictionary. He had classical allusions ever ready, but up to 1819 he had not succeeded in vivifying his lore. However we may seek to define Greek art (in addition to its obvious qualities of precision and clarity, we may perhaps say roughly that it has a certain stillness charged with emotion, that it is statuesque with movement powerfully suggested), it is indubitable that the Greek spirit is present in Keats's interpretation of the figures on a Grecian urn, in his resurrection, so to speak, of the goddess Psyche, and in *Lamia* and *Hyperion*. So learned a Grecian as De Quincey, who accused Keats of "trampling upon his mother-tongue as with the hoofs of a buffalo," and said that *Endymion* exhibits "the very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy," called *Hyperion* "imperishable" and ascribed to it "the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture." By what miracle, then, did Keats give life to his Classical Dictionary ! Possibly the Elgin Marbles, by which he was profoundly impressed in 1817 (cf. the *Sonnet on seeing the Elgin Marbles*), taught him something of the Greek treatment of life and enabled him to look at certain forms as the Greek sculptors looked at them. Beyond this there is no explanation of what must be accounted a triumph of intuition or of sheer genius.

It is difficult to say which, on the whole, is the finest of the three great examples of Keatsian mediævalism—never excelled by any of the nineteenth-century mediævalists—*The Pot of Basil*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, or *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. Certain, however, it is that the famous *Eve of St. Agnes*, for all its marvellous visualisation, luxury of colouring, and beauty of language, has nothing to compare with the two stanzas of *The Pot of Basil* beginning "O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away !" The delicate, plaintive fugal music of the former stanza—one can hear the clinging whisper of muted violins, the heartrending simplicity and pathos of the latter. There is nothing like this in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.¹ Nevertheless, the much shorter *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is, perhaps, the finest of the three, the summit of Keats's mediævalism, and possibly his greatest poem. Maybe

¹ Certain resemblances to *Christabel* are outweighed by dissimilarities. "Coleridge's art is temperate and suggestive ; spiritual too with an unequalled power of haunting the mind with a sense of ghostly presences. In



From the Painting by William Hilton, R.A.

John Keats

The Eve of St. Agnes and *The Pot of Basil* are overloaded; they have an elusive defect which one may, perhaps, call *over-decorativeness*. From this *La Belle Dame* is free. The ballad may be autobiographical (cf. p. 443), and, if so, that may be the reason why, in a mediæval setting, there is a wideness of suggestion and a subtle poignancy which belong to no period, and are not usually found except when a poet is writing of emotions aroused by his own time and in the manner of his age.

The peroration of Matthew Arnold's *Essay in Criticism* is often quoted: "No one else in English poetry, save Shakespeare, has in expression quite the fascinating felicity of Keats, his perfection of loveliness. 'I think,' he said humbly, 'I shall be among the English poets after my death.' He is; he is with Shakespeare." A juster impression is likely to be obtained from a previous sentence of the same *Essay*: "Keats accomplished so much in poetry, that in one of the two great modes by which poetry interprets, in the faculty of naturalistic interpretation, in what we call natural magic, he ranks with Shakespeare." For the most part, it is precisely upon this naturalistic interpretation, and not upon a higher and more spiritual interpretation, that Keats lavished his "perfection of loveliness" in diction and fancy. His limitation—backsliding, one is inclined to say—is described by himself in the last stanza of the *Ode to Psyche*:

"Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant
pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and
bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;

"And in the midst of this wild quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same:
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!"

It cannot but be disappointing in the poet who wrote *Hyperion* and those Odes, supreme in their kind, *To Autumn* ("perhaps the most perfect poem in the language"), *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, that he should so much and willingly have stayed in and have expended his gifts on "the rosy sanctuary," when his genius had power over the pines, the dark-cluster'd trees, and over the steepes of the wild-ridgèd mountains.

Two important aspects of Keats's thought are to be found most fully expressed in his letters: "What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be Truth—whether it exists before or not—for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: for they are all, in their sublime creative force, of essential Beauty. In a Word, you may know my favourite speculation. . . ."

Apart from his æsthetic theory and view of pain, Keats's philosophy, his "criticism of life," was deeply pessimistic. In truths he sought consolations. The emotional power of *Hyperion* is in its vast regrets. There are two classes of men: those who have an ineradicable *joie de vivre*, and those who, not having the *joie de vivre*, yet find *des joies immenses dans la vie—et des douleurs*. Keats was of the latter class, and is pre-eminently its poet. He found that the *douleurs* outweighed, or were the end of, the *joies*. Witness the beautiful and profound *Ode on Melancholy*. Deep though it be, this poem is not the end of philosophy as regards beauty, joy, and melancholy. There are ample signs that Keats would have outgrown this had he lived; that as his insight would have become more penetrating and spiritual, so he would have struck a different balance between *les joies et les douleurs*. His poetry gave a new beauty to the language, but it is this potential Keats, as well as his actual achievement, which did so much to establish the Romantic Revival, and which have made a young man, who died aged twenty-five, not only one of the great English poets, but one of the chief influences in subsequent English poetry.

There is an admirable edition of Keats, ed. Buxton Forman, in five small shilling volumes (Gowans & Gray, 1900-1*); the original edition by Forman in 4 vols., 1833; the Hampstead edition (1902); edited by E. de Selincourt (1905 and 1906). The official Life is that of Monckton-Milnes, Lord Houghton (1848), reinforced critically by Sidney Colvin's *Keats* (English Men of Letters) and Colvin's edition of the *Letters* (1891); F. M. Owen's *Study of Keats* (1830); and the essays of Arnold, Swinburne, W. H. Hudson, and Robert Bridges. See also Mr. Buxton Forman's essay in *The Bookman*, October, 1906. Both in this chapter and in the section on De Quincey the writers are much indebted for valuable help and independent study to Mr. Stephen Reynolds, and also for much aid in revision in Parts X. and XI. from Mr. Harold Spencer Scott, Mr. H. Davey, Mr. R. Ingpen, and others.

his scene the touches are light and few; all is hurried, mysterious, shadowy. But Keats was a word-painter, his treatment more sensuous than Coleridge's and fuller of imagery. He lingers over the figure of the maiden disrobing, and over the furnishings of her room. The architectural details are there for their own sake—as pictures; the sculptured dead in the chapel, the footworn stones, the cobwebbed arches, broad hall pillar, and dusky galleries; the little moonlight room, pale, latticed, chill; the chain-drooped lamp." The story—of a lover who, being at feud with his mistress's clan, ventures into his foemen's castle while a revel is toward, is guided by the nurse to his lady's bower and carries her off—is almost too slight for its descriptive mantle "rough with germs of gold" (cf. *English Romanticism*, Beers).

CHAPTER X

THE COCKNEY SCHOOL: LEIGH HUNT AND TOM HOOD— QUARTERLY REVIEWS AND MONTHLY MAGAZINES

I

“Wit, poet, proseman, partyman, translator,
Hunt, thy best title yet is *Indicator*.”

—CHARLES LAMB.

“Though Melancholy would seem to have touched thy heart with her painful, salutary hand, yet is thy fancy mercurial, undepressed, and sparkles and crackles more from the contact—as the northern lights when they near the frozen pole.”—T. G. WAINWRIGHT ON Tom Hood.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT was born at Southgate, Middlesex, on October 19th, 1784. His mother was a refined and sensitive woman of Quaker extraction; his father, a decayed planter of Barbados, was an eloquent, somewhat theatrical and extremely feckless metropolitan preacher. Hunt entered Christ's Hospital immediately after Lamb and Coleridge had quitted it; and there, despite the rigours of the curriculum, he wrote a large quantity of imitative verse between the ages of twelve and sixteen, imitated from Spenser, Thomson, Collins, and Gray, eked out with the aid of Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*. He never became a Grecian, and his continuation schools were the London bookstalls, where he devoured all the poetry he could come across. His first volume of verse was published by his father in 1801, and in 1804 he was already writing essays for *The Traveller*. The next year found him theatrical critic, and one with amazing dash and assurance, to the recently started *News* of his elder brother John; and in 1807 he brought out five small volumes of classic tales, selected from Johnson, Voltaire, Marmontel, and others, with critical essays by the editor. After a short time as a clerk in the War Office, he was soon drawn off again to his proper sphere of literary journalism in his brother's new weekly, *The Examiner*. Some of Hunt's essays of this period enjoyed the honour of association with stronger work by William Hazlitt in a reprint of 1817, called *The Round Table*. But the independence of

The Examiner gained many enemies, and its animation was nearly suspended, when in 1812 it ventured upon a candid delineation of the Regent as a fat Adonis of fifty, sunk in sensuality and libertinism.

In February, 1813, the brothers were sentenced to two years' imprisonment for this grave political offence, and Leigh Hunt, as the mild and invalid poet of the Surrey gaol, became a popular hero among all the literary leaders of the Radical party. The great Bentham himself came and visited him in prison, played a game of shuttlecock with him, and with incomparable lucidity sketched a *reform* in the manufacture of battledore handles.

After coming out of prison Hunt migrated from the Edgware Road to Hampstead, where he first got to know Keats, and introduced him to Shelley. *The Examiner* was continued as a Sunday paper more on literary than on political lines, and by its praise and championship of Shelley, Keats, “Corney” Webb, Hazlitt (the “Cockney Aristotle”), and Haydon (the “Cockney Raphael”) constituted the coterie which, under the persecution of *Blackwood*, in 1817 became known as the “Cockney school” in English poetry. In 1816 Hunt brought out his chief narrative poem, *The Story of Rimini*, based upon the love story of *Paolo and Francesca*, as outlined in Dante. Two years later appeared more original and translated poems in *Foliage*; while during 1819-20 many of his best essays first saw the light in a new weekly venture,

The Indicator, and he was simultaneously occupied in a metrical version of the favourite *Amyntas* of Tasso.

The two chief orbits in which Hunt's discursive, highly amusing, and most characteristic *Autobiography* revolves are, first, his imprisonment, and the acquaintanceships that sprang out of it; and, secondly, his visit to Italy. He sailed there in the autumn of 1821, to do the drudgery for an independent quarterly magazine, which Byron proposed to establish, to be called *The Liberal*. Byron was in the throes of one of his parsimonious fits at the time; he was disgusted at Hunt taking his wife and children with him, and his aristocratic exclusiveness now discovered something fulsome and offensive in the manners of the man whom he had formerly compared with Hampden. Shelley, before he sailed to his death, had considerable difficulty in arranging any terms at all between the proprietor and editor of *The Liberal*, which started inauspiciously and only ran to four numbers. The two men, on further acquaintance, proved thoroughly uncongenial, and their relations mutually vexatious. Byron said good-bye to Hunt for ever in 1823; his death, following that of Shelley, left Hunt without any visible means of support, but he lingered on at Florence, writing as copiously as ever for the English papers until September, 1825. His old friend Vincent Novello then made arrangements with Colburn, the publisher, for an advance of money, on account of a book, which enabled Hunt to return to England. The book eventually appeared in 1828 as *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*, and created a sensation of scandal at the time on account of its outspoken criticism of Hunt's erratic benefactor, who was now by way of being regarded as a martyred hero. Instead of justifying himself to the public by his frankness, as he had hoped, Hunt only earned for himself the title of ingrate. With some considerable modifications, however, the book formed a nucleus of Hunt's most substantial contribution to literature, the delightful *Autobiography* (1850), first composed in 1849, and then revised and partially rewritten ten years later. Hunt's subsequent critical and journalistic work was of the most multitudinous character, and most of his published volumes consisted of gleanings from its almost inexhaustible variety.

Of his critical studies the most valuable,

perhaps, is his *Imagination and Fancy* (1844), comprising selections from the poets, with critical notes, illustrating the indispensable character of the highest forms of imagination and fancy in relation to the poetic art. As an index to the new romantic spirit in poetry, and as a guide to the youthful student as to what is essential in poetry, it may well be doubted whether this unpretending little volume has ever been surpassed. The later years of Hunt's quaint and harmlessly Bohemian existence were spent in the western suburbs of London at Cheyne Row, where he was, for a time, next door to Carlyle; Edwardes Square, Kensington; and Cornwall Road, Hammersmith. But he died at a friend's house in Putney, August 28th, 1859.

During his Cheyne Row days (1833-40) he was often in the direst poverty; but in 1844 he obtained a pension of £120 from Sir Percy, the son of his old benefactor, the poet Shelley, and three years later he was awarded a Civil List pension of £200 a year. There was very little insincerity about Hunt's little affectations, of which a certain parade of a total innocence of the use and value of money was the chief. This oddity suggested a trait to Charles Dickens, which he worked up into the unpleasant character of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*. Otherwise the two characters had nothing in common, and Dickens very properly disclaimed the intention (not perhaps unnaturally attributed to him) of gibbeting his friend through the medium of such a presentment.

Leigh Hunt is a decidedly important figure in our literature, for though not a great author himself, he has been a source of great authorship in others. He enormously increased both the depth and the area of literary sensibility. The world of books was to him an enchanted forest, the faery charm of which he succeeded in imparting to multitudes of people who had little opportunity themselves of exploring the delectable alleys and reaching the clearings where the flowers seemed doubly bright by contrast and the sky a little heaven remote from the light of common day. As a critic Hunt's taste was almost unerring, and far more catholic than either Hazlitt's or even Lamb's. As an essayist he is a kind of feminine diminutive of Lamb, excellent in fancy and in his unlimited command of literary illustration; but far inferior in decisive insight and penetrative masculine wit.

With his great powers of assimilation and marvellous gift of poetic appreciation, it seems remarkable that Hunt should never have attained to greater skill in the divine art. Except, however, for an occasional *jeu d'esprit*, such as *Abou Ben Adhem* (after some recently discovered Arabic original) or *The Glove and the Lions*, though he is perpetually imitating the best models (and some not so good, such as Ambrose Philips), he scarcely ever rises to a fine line. In directness and energy of expression we should hardly expect much from him—no greater contrast between prettiness and power could be instanced than that between Hunt's and D'Annunzio's treatment of the Paolo and Francesca legend. Incapable of realising or even conceiving action, he is always poetising round about the point. But we are struck with Hunt's incapacity to strike out a good rhythm, to construct tolerable blank verse, or to introduce melodious rhyme where the subject requires it. In all these things he is strangely defective, and he is best in heroic couplets writing about "Christmas," "Sudden Fine Weather," or other such themes as he would have adorned in *The Indicator*. As Lamb said, with his usual combination of wit and sense, Hunt's *indicative* was also his *potential* mood.

A thorough Cockney by birth, breeding, and affinity was Thomas Hood, who represents in English poetry all the qualities which are correlated with the sharpening of the perceptive faculties and the attenuation of fibre brought about by the protracted confinement of life in great cities. Like Hunt and Rogers, and even to a certain extent Keats, he illustrates the tendency of the town brother to over-decorate the country, and to huddle together incongruous elements of country life. He has the abnormal humour-sense of the gamin whose horizon has always been bounded by neighbouring cliffs of brick and mortar. Moreover, he has, to a very remarkable extent, the hectic revolutionary sentiment of the pent-in and sedentary toiler of our great cities. With this quality went the clinging affectionateness which has shown itself in a profusion of endearing epithets, and the profound compassion for the poor which was so characteristic of his temperament. He has a remarkable talent for the grotesque, and his weakness for mortuary emblems and allusions suggests another aspect of Hood's literary gift, and

prepares us for the versatile character of his output.

Thomas Hood was of Scots descent, his grandfather having been a humble tiller of the soil at Errol, near Dundee, but was a pure Cockney by birth and reputation. He was born within a few yards of the Bank of England, in the Poultry, on May 23rd, 1799. Of his life's adventures he says himself, "Story? God bless you, I have none to tell, sir." He had half an education, he tells us further, at a *semi-nary*, the Prospect House Academy at Clapham, which he celebrates in his delightful *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Clapham Academy*. On the death of his father, an engraver, in 1811, his mother removed to Islington, and after three years' more schooling he was sent, partially to recruit his health, to some relatives of his father at Dundee. He had already been initiated into those profitable mercantile mysteries which enabled Sir Thomas Gresham to gild his grasshopper. When he came back from Dundee in 1818 he was apprenticed to his mother's brother.

His natural bias was already towards the literary craft, and in 1821 the required opening came. In that year John Scott, the able editor and proprietor of *The London Magazine*, was killed in a (pen and ink originated) duel at Chalk Farm. The new proprietors, Taylor and Hessey, had formerly been in relations with Hood's grandfather. They appointed the enthusiastic young man as a sort of sub-editor of the magazine, in which capacity he had to pass for press the copy of such contributors as Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Barry Cornwall, and T. G. Wainwright, while a free hand was given to him in humorous "Notices to Correspondents." His first original contribution (the *Ode to Hope*) appeared in the July number of the magazine in this same year. Poetical affinity drew him to John Hamilton Reynolds, the friend and disciple of Keats; and he married Reynolds's sister Jane on May 5th, 1825. But his special admiration among the contributors to *The London* was Charles Lamb, whom he long despaired of ever getting to know. When, however, Charles and Mary Lamb moved to Islington in 1823, Hood began to see much of them, and had the delight of meeting Wordsworth and Coleridge at their house.

In August, 1822, his fine Keatsian and classical poem *Lycus the Centaur* appeared in

the magazine. Hood had no Latin, and less Greek, and he probably got the classical colouring through the society that he mixed in, especially from Lamb. But at the close of 1823 Hood lost his position on the magazine, and turned his attention to light literature as a means of support. His first essay in this direction was the *Odes and Addresses to Great People* (March, 1825), written in conjunction with Reynolds, and next year came his successful illustrated volumes of *Whims and Oddities*, the success of which determined the bias of all his later work.

Hood's comic diversions in *The London Magazine*, and the pronounced success of his *Whims and Oddities*, gave him notoriety as a fun-maker, and doomed him either to starve or to grimace for the national amusement during the twenty after-years of his toiling, pathetic life. It was a sin and shame to preserve much of this comic lumber, labelled all over with addresses no longer known or “gone away.” At this period of 1826-7 Hood's lyrical vein was flowing at its finest and sweetest, and he was lucky in finding hospitality for some exquisite waifs and strays in the keepsake annuals or albums started by Ackerman in 1823, notably *Forget-me-Not*, in which appeared *Ruth*; and *Friendship's Offering*, in which appeared “I remember, I remember,” the most original lyric he had yet produced.

The Plea of the Midsummer Fairies and Other Poems, containing the last part of Hood's serious poetry, was brought out by Longmans in 1827, and proved an absolute failure. It was his first, and proved to be also his last, volume of serious verse. With the exception of *Miss Kilmansegg*, *The Death-Bed*, and *Eugene Aram*, Hood wrote practically no poetry save of the prose order for the next fifteen years. The deep tenderness and profound melancholy of the man remained to the public a sealed book. During this period Hood was living in Robert Street, Adelphi, writing *Eugene Aram* for *The Gem* and, in 1829, helping to run the new literary journal *The Athenæum* (started by James Silk Buckingham in the previous year), of which he was for a time a co-proprietor. He gave up his share when Dilke reduced the price from a shilling to fourpence, but remained on friendly contributing terms with the journal. Towards the close of 1829 he moved to Winchmore Hill, near Enfield, and commenced *The Comic*

Annual (1830-42), which was to be for some years his staple of livelihood, a humorous variant of Hood's own invention upon the literary album.

In May, 1841, Theodore Hook died, and Hood was appointed editor of *The New Monthly* in his place. The post, with a fixed salary of £300, seemed a mine of wealth to Hood and his family. His health as usual improved with his luck—the removal to St. John's Wood may have contributed to this result. In the autumn of 1843 Hood managed a trip to Dundee and Edinburgh, fortified with introductions by his new friend, Charles Dickens, whose *Little Nell* he had praised with an obviously sincere enthusiasm in the pages of *The Athenæum*. In the *Punch* Christmas Number of 1843 appeared the most famous of all Hood's poems. Prompted by the sensitive pity which underlay all his mirth, and stirred by a paragraph in *The Times* about the miserable death of an underpaid needlewoman, Hood wrote the wonderful stanzas of the *Song of the Shirt* at a sitting, and after failures elsewhere, eventually sent them to Mark Lemon, who, with some misgiving, and against the sense of the *Punch* table, inserted them in the Christmas Number. A strong and poignant appeal, instinct with nerves and tense feeling, it went straight to the public heart, then and now, and is said to have touched the heart of that callous thing Society itself. But in the meantime Hood himself was in trouble. He had lost his editorship, for which he was not pre-eminently fitted, and December, 1843, in addition to the *Song of the Shirt*, saw the prospectus of a new venture, *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany* (it eventually ran to three volumes), in which the public were told there was to be complete abstinence from stimulating topics; there would be drawings from the artesian well of the Fine Arts, numbers in each number, which would aim at being merry and wise instead of merry and otherwise. The list of contributors was certainly promising, including Browning, Dickens, Landor, Monckton-Milnes, Barry Cornwall, and G. H. Lewes, and the new venture included in various numbers Hood's own *Haunted House*, *The Bridge of Sighs*, and the beautiful stanzas, “Farewell, life! my senses swim.” But the difficulties were great from the outset. By the time the second volume was launched Hood's health was in a desperate state. He was

cheered by the grant of a Civil List pension from Peel, but grew rapidly worse and died at Devonshire Lodge, Finchley New Road, on May 3rd, 1845. He was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, and his tombstone bears the

touching epitaph, "He sang the Song of the Shirt." The fame of this was indeed world-wide, though as the French encyclopædist, Larousse, pithily says: "Il ne produisit aucun resultat."

Hood was characteristically admired by Rossetti and his circle, who said of him with substantial truth: "He was the finest English poet between the generation of Shelley and the generation of Tennyson." *The Haunted House* alone, Poe thought, was enough to establish Hood as a poet of the first order: it was, he said, powerfully ideal, imaginative, and one of the truest and most thoroughly artistic poems both in theme and execution ever written. And of its author, he said he was one of the noblest and one of the most singularly fanciful of modern poets. "His *Fair Ines* has always had for me an inexpressible charm." The effect of the public's failure to appreciate his *Midsummer Fairies* caused Hood to specialise in verse, and sharpened his perceptive faculties as a verbal impressionist to an almost superhuman extent. The result is seen in such a poem as *The Bridge of Sighs*, a *tour de force* of extraordinary daring, trembling (a superfine critic may think) upon the verge of banality, yet brought to a triumphant conclusion by sheer force of style.

II

"To appreciate aright the value of *The Edinburgh Review*, we must bear in mind the state of the times and the usual character of the periodical literature of the day. The Catholics were unemancipated; the Corporation and Test Acts were unrepealed; the slave trade was tolerated; prisoners tried for their lives could have no counsel; theft was punishable with death."—W. A. COPINGER.

The reviews before 1802—Origin of *The Edinburgh Review*—Jeffrey—Sydney Smith—Douglas Jerrold—*The Quarterly Review* and its founders—*Blackwood's* and *The Chambers's*.

FALLIBLE as it always is, and hidebound as it usually must be, the periodical review is probably the best means yet devised by man to test new ideas, to sample new books, and to submit a preliminary estimate of them to the larger audience beyond the class-room and the study. This is all the more important in England, inasmuch as the drama has for the most part abandoned its serious purpose, and is unavailable for the ventilation of original ideas. And yet the first review to walk alone, and leave the booksellers' or publishers' go-cart, has only been started just over a hundred years. Before 1802 there were two standard reviews in England, *The Monthly* and *The Critical*, dating respectively from 1749 and 1756. They gave unsigned reports on books, often of considerable length and full of excerpts—valuable in their kind; but they were written mostly by drudges and penny-a-liners, who worked under the orders of the bookseller like slaves under the rattan of a negro overseer. Griffiths had in his chain-gang at one time or another Goldsmith, Christopher Smart, Kenney, and a whole rival host to the myrmidons of Dr. Tobias.

Far, therefore, from being written by gentlemen for gentlemen, the old review article was written on the sweated labour principle by humble garreteers for astute advertising publishers. Their truculent scowls and fearsome grins were no more their own than those of an old-time Japanese warrior. The extraordinary change by which such review articles came to be written, not by poor hacks, but by Whig mandarins, was effected by *The Edinburgh Review*. Formerly if a gentleman by any chance wrote for a review he felt he could hardly take money for it—the pay, moreover, was refined cruelty (£2 per sheet). Under Jeffrey, the pilot of *The Edinburgh*, every one had to take his fee, which soon came to be 20 to 40 guineas a sheet. The bookseller and his methods were wholly discarded. *The Edinburgh* had come, not to praise books, but to judge them ("Cum nocens absolvitur judex damnatur"), and it may be added that the black cap was in constant requisition. The seat of all this judicial severity was quite naturally Edinburgh—the Modern Athens, the home of the liberal common-sense dogmatism of the eighteenth century, and the natural rendezvous during the continental blockade of all the clever young men in Britain who sought the advantages of a foreign capital without the peril of incurring the hospitality of Napoleon. Among these clever youths was a young bear-leader, or nobleman's tutor, Sydney Smith. The idea of a review first occurred to him with the joking motto, "Tenui musam meditatur avena."

It was started in a spirit of spree, and hardly expected, even by the founders, to outlive the original *Edinburgh Review*, which, started in 1755, perished miserably in 1756. The story has been told again and again—by Smith himself in his articles and letters, by Cockburn in his *Life of Jeffrey*, by Brougham, by Bagehot, by Philarete Chasles in the *Revue Contemporaine* for 1853, by Chevrillon in *Sydney Smith et la Renaissance des Idées libérales en Angleterre*, by Hayward in his *Essays*, and recently, and very well, by Lewis Gates in his *Three Studies in Literature*. Yet it must be briefly recapitulated here.

The Edinburgh Review was founded by a knot of clever young men (Sydney Smith, 31; Jeffrey, 29; Horner, 24; Brougham, 23) who met in the upper story of an Edinburgh house and gave the world their first number in October, 1802. It produced an electrical effect—so much greater was its vivacity than that of its rivals, the old *British Monthly* and *Critical Review*. Its politics were the exultant delight of the Whigs—it adopted the blue coat and buff waistcoat of C. J. Fox as its colours—and it professed to stand on two legs,

contemporary criticism and Whig politics. Its politics were, for the most part, consistent with trimming, and its real political influence came considerably later. The advanced Radicals and the philosophical Radicals both accused it of truckling. But its reputation was gained primarily by its slashing literary style. Much of it appears flimsy enough now. The time then was ripe for it. A medium was needed through which the most active minds could dissent *de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis* to the intelligent public in the interest of religious toleration and rational reform.

The ministerial pronouncements of its arch-critic Jeffrey are such as now can only amaze. Amid the great constellation of poets who had come within his knowledge as a critic—Byron, Moore, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Crabbe, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson—he discovered permanent qualities in two only, Rogers and Campbell! He describes *Wilhelm Meister* without circumlocution as "so much trash." In fact he represents orthodox opinion of the day in stylish circles, elevated only to the extent of being expressed with exceptional point. In politics he is unvaryingly pessimistic, and has difficulty in keeping his feeling of alarm for the country and its landed proprietors within bounds. Never by any chance does he overstep the boundary between well-bred, versatile talent and original genius. As we should expect, Jeffrey and his team are either quite indifferent or absolutely hostile to most of the new forces stirring men's minds. They detest enthusiasm wherever it may be found, and every great impulse of the kind that leads men to self-sacrifice and to wonder, and to a new world of ideal creation, found them antagonistic. They savagely ridiculed Coleridge, the great seminal mind of one philosophical school; they fiercely attacked Bentham and Mill, the great leaders of another; they were equally opposed to the Evangelicals who revered Wilberforce, and to the Tractarians who said "Credo in Newmannum." They ignored Shelley and Blake, and tried to laugh Wordsworth and Coleridge out of the field. On the other hand, they were tolerant of all opinions so long only as they were not extreme, and involved no great self-sacrifice. Morality to them was enlightened selfishness, yet they wanted to see an end of flagrant inequalities, and such blemishes on the social order as our ferocious old criminal code, the Game Laws, Colonial slavery, the anti-Catholic Laws, the abuses of Chancery, and such like. Their benignity was real in its way, but it paid little attention in a work-a-day world to the claims of the ideal.

The emblem of this order of ideas during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century was the portly trenchant-looking yet rubicund parson, Sydney Smith, the grandson of a prosperous tradesman, who was born at Woodford, Essex, on June 3rd, 1771. He got a scholarship at Winchester School, followed by a scholarship and fellowship at New College (1789), so that from his eighteenth year he was no burden at all to his father. In 1792 he took his degree, and failing means to wait at the bar, very contentedly entered the Church (ordained 1794), though he soon found a country curacy at Nether Avon on Salisbury Plain very little to his taste. Jokes and dinners in London were ever his element—simple pleasures, bad reasoning, and worse cookery soon tired him. Like Lamb, he found the country a serious bore. "I do all I can," he writes, "to believe the poetical lies about the country; but without success. I am tired of simple pleasures." What he pined for were Luttrell's jokes, side dishes, wax candles, laughter, and noise. "You may depend on it that all lives lived out of London are mistakes, more or less grievous, but mistaken." "I suspect that the fifth act of life should be in great cities. It is there that a man most forgets himself and his infirmities." He managed to get a travelling tutorship; this landed him in Edinburgh, where the reputation of the Hume-Adam Smith constellation lingered, and the teaching was world-famous. In 1800 he married there, and two years later first conceived *The Edinburgh Review*, writing no less than eighteen articles in the first year. In 1803 he left for London, made a sensation at Albemarle Street by his lecturing (his lectures represented Dugald Stewart and Reid *rechauffé* for a West-End audience, and were described by himself as the most successful literary imposture of the day), and in 1805 made his entry at Holland House, where, and also at the famous Whig coterie, "The King of Clubs," he met such good representatives of enlightened oligarchy as the third Lord Holland (the nephew of Fox), Porson, Mackintosh, John Allen, Hallam, Ricardo, Creevey, Whishaw, Romilly, Horner, Luttrell, Jeffrey, William Lamb, Playfair, Lansdowne, Moore, Rogers, Davy, Rumford, Washington Irving, Brougham, and, of course, his jovial brother, "Bobus" Smith.

In 1806 Smith was presented with the living of Foston-le-Clay, eight miles from York, worth £500 a year, but his preacher-ship at the Foundling Hospital rendered it unnecessary for him to take up residence. His sermons were masterpieces of sober morality and rational common sense. This last quality so startled his congregations that they deemed him mad. The very vergers were scared. "A clerk as pale as death helped me off with my gown; he was afraid I might bite him." In 1807 he published the *Plymley Letters* in defence of Catholic emancipation, the authorship of which (for they were issued anonymously) the Government took great pains, unsuccessfully, to discover. When the Residence Bill was passed in 1808 Smith was exiled to his living in Yorkshire. No clergyman had resided there for one hundred and fifty years, and the parsonage was a "hovel." He took his family to Heslington, two miles from York, from whence he could perform his duties, and tried to effect an exchange; failing this, he resolved to build, and settle down cheerfully to a country life. He bought an "ancient green chariot," christened the "Immortal," which was drawn by his carthorses; his furniture was made by the village carpenter, and for his butler he found a girl "made like a milestone" and called her "Bunch." He took up farming and horse-breeding, though he seldom rode out without a fall. He directed his labourers with the help of a telescope and a speaking trumpet, and invented a "universal scratcher" for his cattle. He became a magistrate, and having attended medical lectures at Edinburgh, set up a village dispensary. Old and young he doctored with unremitting zeal. "As I don't shoot or hunt, it is my only rural amusement." He was on the friendliest terms with the farmers, and interested himself in the poor. In 1820 he

was left £400 a year by his father's sister, and soon afterwards the living of Londesborough was presented to him. In 1825 Smith made his first political speeches at the meetings of the clergy of Cleveland and Yorkshire against Catholic emancipation. In 1828 Lord Lyndhurst, the Chancellor, gave him a prebend at Bristol, which induced him to give up writing in *The Edinburgh Review*, and he exchanged Foston for Combe-Florey in Somerset, where he was able to afford a library, and started at once to rebuild the parsonage. On October 11th, 1831, he made his famous speech at Taunton, comparing the House of Lords to Mrs. Partington resisting the Atlantic Ocean. In the same year Lord Grey made him canon-residentiary of St. Paul's. After *Peter Plymley* his most characteristic contribution was the *Letters to Archdeacon Singleton* (1837), in which he pleaded for inequality of clerical incomes on the ground that, if the excitement of the lottery were withdrawn, first-rate men would cease to enter the Church. On the death of his brother Courtenay in 1839, he inherited £50,000, and took No. 56, Green Street, Grosvenor Square, where he could fully indulge his hospitable propensities. He was perhaps the most popular social figure of his day, the incarnation of fun and humorous common sense. A latitudinarian of buoyant animal spirits, he lashed out against every kind of extravagance, and oscillated between wit and buffoon, following up ridiculous ideas with such exquisite foolery that guests were convulsed, young ladies tittered when he said grace, and the servants bolted from the room to conceal their uncontrollable laughter, and hardened conversationists, such as Macaulay (whom he described as a book in breeches) and Mackintosh, were contorted with explosive merriment. The psychological side of religion made no appeal to him. He merely laughed at the Evangelicals, the Puseyites, the Young England party—"wild beasts at Ephesus" extremists of all kinds were to him. The Church to him was merely a branch of the civil service for the inculcation of good manners. As a talker, of course, he did much good, if only to the extent to which he sent up the thermometer in our cold conversational climate, and by the high standard of tolerance, so indispensable to good manners, which he always maintained. In literature he was primarily a journalist, and he enormously increased the animation of the ordinary English review. His *Plymley Letters* are models of good-humoured banter, but they can hardly claim a permanent place—what pamphlets can, if we except those of Swift? Most of his writing was done with a laughing and almost riotous ease, and tossed over to be corrected by his wife. Such were the *Edinburgh Essays* collected in 1839, besides which we have the *Plymley Letters* and the private correspondence. The following delightful private epistle is an epitome of the point of view of this laughing philosopher (Franklin and Paley with a *sauce piquante* of his own):

ADVICE CONCERNING LOW SPIRITS

FOSTON, February 16th, 1820.

"DEAR LADY GEORGIANA [HARCOURT],—Nobody has suffered more from low spirits than I have done—so I feel for you. 1st. Live as well as you dare. 2nd. Go into the shower-bath with a small quantity of water at a temperature low enough to give you a slight sensation of cold, 75° or 80°. 3rd. Amusing books. 4th. Short views of human life—not further than dinner or tea. 5th. Be as busy as you can. 6th. See as much as you can of those friends who respect and like you. 7th. And of those acquaintances who amuse you. 8th. Make no secret of low spirits to your friends, but talk of them freely—they are always worse for dignified concealment. 9th. Attend to the effects tea and coffee produce upon you. 10th. Compare your lot with that of other people. 11th. Don't expect too much from human life—a sorry business at the best. 12th. Avoid poetry, dramatic representations (except comedy), music, serious novels, melancholy, sentimental people, and everything likely to excite feeling or emotion, not ending in active benevolence. 13th. Do good and endeavour to please everybody of every degree. 14th. Be as much as you can in the open air without fatigue. 15th. Make the room where you commonly sit gay and pleasant. 16th. Struggle by little and little against idleness. 17th. Don't be too severe upon yourself, or underrate yourself, but do yourself justice. 18th. Keep good blazing fires. 19th. Be firm and constant in the exercise of rational religion. 20th. Believe me, dear Lady Georgiana,

"Very truly yours,

"SYDNEY SMITH."

He retired from his business as a diner-out in 1843, profoundly convinced that digestion is the great secret of life; and that character, talents, virtues, and qualities are powerfully affected by beef, mutton, pie-crust, and rich soups. Such a man must continue to live in the chronicles of club-land and high conviviality, even though the very distinction of his humour serve to emphasise the anomaly of such a glorified diner-out being a high dignitary of the National Church. He made up his mind that he was unequal to a bishopric, but was hurt at his friends not giving him the refusal of one, with the result that he died plain canon on February 22nd, 1845. He lived long enough to give a cordial salute to two brilliant youths of genius—John Ruskin and Charles Dickens. It was rumoured that he was to sit to Landseer for his portrait, but he dispelled the rumour by remarking, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

Sydney was the king of wits and jesters, and no talking humorist has planted out so many *facetiae*. He anticipated, by nearly one hundred years, the philosophy of Little Mary, for he was always talking of the flocks and herds he had eaten, of the fate of the resident clergy to die of indigestion, and of the cruel despotism of the stomach, and vicarious sufferings of the instep and ankle. His salutation to a friend who had grown much stouter on a sudden, "Why, I did not half see you when you were in town last year," his dedication of a certain dean to be preached to death by wild curates, his suggestion that the canons should lay

their heads together to provide a wooden pavement round St. Paul's, his reference to Macaulay's brilliant "flashes of silence," and to Croker disputing about the dates of his sins with the recording angel, his opinion that a surgical operation was necessary to get a joke into a Scot, and his scepticism as to whether a bishop could flirt—"The most he can say is, 'I will see you in the vestry after service,'"—these and a score of other witticisms are permanent contributions to the merriment of good men. Bishops were his favourite butts. Was it not he who suggested the combustion of a bishop, even if it were only Sodor and Man, as the only sure means of preventing the locking of doors on the railway? When in *The Edinburgh* once Brougham wrote characteristically of Ritson: "We take for granted that Mr. Ritson supposes Providence to have had some share in producing him," Sydney interpolated "though for what inscrutable purposes we profess ourselves unable to conjecture." The buoyant gesture and self-enjoying laugh with which he acted his jests greatly enhanced their effect, as may be imagined from the following examples. Talking of the intelligence and concert which birds have among each other, cranes, crows, etc., showing that they must have some means of communicating their thoughts, he once said, "I daresay they make the same remark of us. That fat old crow there (indicating himself), what a prodigious noise he is making! I have no doubt he has some power of communicating." Sydney was speaking on another occasion of women bearing pain with greater ease than men, which Moore explained by asserting that they had less physical sensibility, and that they could hold, for instance, a hot teapot much longer than men could. When Tom offered to put it to the test, Sydney professed horror at evidence of such hardened insensibility to female suffering. "He has all his life," he cried, "been trying the sex with hot teapots; the burning ploughshare was nothing to it. I think I hear his terrific tone in a *tête-à-tête*, 'Bring a teapot.'"

The literary landscape of England is in the main a sunny one, and few have contributed to this effect more than Sydney Smith, whose smile is as delightful for its jollity as Lamb's is for its finesse. Sworn foe to idealism, enthusiasm, and general ideas, he is the incarnation of equable bonhomie and whimsical common sense. In person of the family of Falstaff—a Falstaff nourished not on bread and sack, but on port and poultry—his people loved him, revered him for his active benevolence, and ran grinning to perform his lightest behest. The windows and doors of this life are open to an extent almost unexampled in letters. It might have been lived under glass, so perfectly transparent is the soul of the great Sydney: for great he was, and, after Johnson, perhaps the most robust and inveterate of all our native wits. A Philistine in a measure he was, without a doubt, much more so than Jeffrey. He would never have committed himself to "this will never do"; his indifference to Lake ideas and Lake poetry was far too Olympian. Of Shelley and Keats he never so much as speaks, and he manifestly prefers Madame de Staël and Lady Mary Montagu to Lamb and Madame de Sévigné—twelve volumes of pretty turns were too much for his solid humour. His sympathies were undoubtedly *borné*, his imagination concrete (facts and figures, prices and statistics formed the staple of his talk), his book-knowledge narrow. He was indeed a student of men rather than of ideas. At Foston he never bought a new book. Later he read a little more. "I sit in my study, looking upon a thousand flowers, in order to keep up arguments with Allen and Lord Holland." By education and inclination a thorough aristocrat, Sydney was not wholly devoid of some of the weakness of a hanger-on. Half his correspondents were lords and ladies. He regarded those outside the monde of Mayfair with indulgent tolerance. His satire was devoid of bitterness. It stung no one. It is somewhat doubtful whether it deserves the name of satire at all. But Sydney had no *sæva indignatio*; though in his Church views he rather resembled Swift, and, like him, lost the purple, profit, and power of episcopal rank by playing with the fringe of his pulpit cushion. After Dickens and Moore, Sydney Smith was perhaps the most popular man of letters of his century. He seems to have had, indeed, rather an undue share of the good things of life. So good-humoured was he, however, and so irresistibly witty, that we can forgive him anything.

A counterfoil to Sydney Smith, in date a little subsequent to him, is the well-known name, and to-day it is little more than a name, of Douglas Jerrold. With less frolic than Theodore Hook, less rotund and facile humour than Sydney Smith, less quibble and quaintness than Tom Hood, he surpassed them all in intellectual flash and strength; his wit was all steel points. What remains of such caustic wits as Selwyn, Harry Luttrell, Hook, Jerrold, or the more genial Shirley Brooks? A few stories, a few retorts, the rest is silence. For a long period Jerrold's name served as a centre of attraction for all the unappropriated jokes of the period, but a migration has set in, and during the last fifteen years jokes have journeyed in platoons from Jerrold to Jowett. It could not be alleged against him that he was afraid to tackle men of his own size, for his favourite butts were Thackeray and Albert Smith, to whose remonstrance that they were after all in the same boat, he made the well-known retort, "Yes, but not with the same skulls." His epigrammatic style suited the artificial comedy of the day, and is seen to advantage in *Black-eyed Susan* (1829), *The Rent Day* (1832), and *Time works Wonders* (1835). His best-known novel, *The Man made of Money*, has the qualities of a comedy rather than those of a novel. As with Thackeray, it was a good day for Jerrold when he found *Punch*, and *Punch* made one of his best hits with *Mrs. Caudle's Curtain Lectures*, Dickensian sketches of a broad and robust humour which has its times and its seasons, but not of a very permanent type. No meeting of wits during the Thackerayan period was quite complete without an acrid comment from Jerrold. His wit was so rasping as often to appear venomous, but venom was by no means a characteristic of the man. Tormented by an eternal want of pence, and tired out, like Hood, by humorous exertions, he had a charitable soul. An indefatigable journalist, the initiator of shilling magazines, he was successful at last as the editor of *Lloyd's Weekly*, but he died prematurely on June 8th, 1857, aged fifty-four.

Macaulay's dictum was that although Sydney Smith was the rarer type of man, he would rather have been Jeffrey. Jeffrey's critical influence as editor of *The Edinburgh* from July, 1803, to June, 1829, has probably had no rival in Britain. Unduly exalted in his own day, he has been unduly depreciated ever since. His mind was much more speculative and much more curious, and it may be added much more open to the reception of new ideas, than his great contributor. He did much to shatter the contemporary idolatry of the Augustan Age, and to introduce a more historical and less dogmatic method of literary criticism. In some respects he may be said to have anticipated Taine's theories in regard to the influence upon literature of the *moment* and the *milieu*. But he was strongly aristocratic in his literary tastes, opposed to all mysticism and spiritual symbolism, to the doctrine of equality, and to any form of socialism, with the result that he was both puzzled and disgusted by the transcendentalism and subjectivity of the school of Wordsworth. In spite of this he was a great critic and a still greater editor. Under him in ten years the circulation of *The Edinburgh* mounted from 789 to nearly 13,000. During his reign he enrolled as contributors Sir Walter Scott (1803), George Ellis (1804), Dr. John Allen (1804), Hallam (1805), Malthus (1808), Mackintosh (1812), Hazlitt (1814), McCulloch (1818), Dr. Arnold (1823), Macaulay (1825), and Carlyle (1827).

Much disgust was caused, naturally, by the strident political partisanship, no less than by the drastic critical creed, of *The Edinburgh*, which in this respect corresponded to the narrow severity of its exergue ("Cum nocens absolvitur . . ."). There was no idea of appreciating a work. The contributors were advocates or sophists, for or against the writer and his views, and Jeffrey presided as judge. When Constable pleaded for more lenient treatment for his publications, his appeal was severely ignored. Above all *The Edinburgh* exasperated the patriots by its despondent views in regard to the war, its depreciation of all native military talent (including Wellington's), and its bitter opposition to the war in Spain. By February, 1809, *The Edinburgh's* cup was full. Scott was offended, and the moderates were sickened by the nauseous political doses they were made to swallow. In this month, accordingly, *The Quarterly Review* was started by Scott, Lockhart, Southey, Canning, Ellis, and a few others, under the auspices of Murray as publisher and Gifford as first editor. The chief supporter of *The Quarterly*, however, or at least its chief literary mainstay after the first few numbers, was John Wilson Croker, one of the ablest and most untiring and exact of our early reviewers. Born in Galway, of a Devonshire stock, on December 20th, 1780, Croker, after being schooled out of a bad stammer by James Knowles, father of Sheridan Knowles, the author of *The Hunchback*, winning medals at Trinity College, Dublin, and perpetrating a few trifles after Churchill, was commended to Wellington, then Irish Secretary, by Spenser Perceval, who later, as Premier, made Croker Secretary of the Admiralty. As a public servant, untiring, somewhat acrid in reply, riveted to his desk, punctilious about every detail, Croker carried the same qualities into reviewing. As executioner-in-chief to *The Quarterly* he made many enemies, and was in consequence submitted to such caricatures as Crawley, Rigby, and Wenham (in *Vanity Fair*, where Wagg is Hook), which failed, however, to scathe him, for after reading Scott he found all other fiction formless and tasteless, and could not read it. Croker's studies on the French Revolution and on Pope, and his laborious edition of Boswell, confirmed his position as a constructive critic. Unhappily Croker, by his pragmatic style and manner, had incurred the intense dislike of the Whig champions, and in Macaulay this dislike became morbid, and led to some rather unworthy attacks. Thus, his *Boswell* was unfairly attacked in "the blue and yellow," and Croker, like Froude, never replied, with similar results. A stout and bitter anti-Reformer to the last, the inventor of the word "Conservative," founder of *The Athenæum*, and chief agent in the transportation to England of the Elgin Marbles, Croker retained the friendship of the best men down to his death on August 10th, 1857.

Since the commencement of *The Edinburgh* and *The Quarterly*, many reviews in imitation of them have been started. Among these may be mentioned *The Westminster Review*, begun in 1824 to advocate the views of advanced thinkers in religion and politics, and still continued after a not very prosperous career; *The British Quarterly*, begun by Dr. Vaughan to represent the cause of dissent; *The North British Review*, originally started as the organ of the Free Church Party in Scotland; *The Dublin Review*, the Catholic organ; *The British and Foreign Quarterly*, and then *The Contemporary*, *The Fortnightly*, *The Nineteenth Century*, *National* and *Monthly* with which we are familiar.

While in the early part of the last century most of the higher and middle classes of Edinburgh were Conservative in their politics, *The Edinburgh Review*, the only Scottish literary journal on which they could look with any pride, was Liberal. Such a state of things was naturally galling to many staunch young Northern Tories; but for some years nothing was done to remedy it. At length, in December, 1816, William Blackwood, an enterprising young Edinburgh publisher, was applied to by two literary men of some slight reputation, James Cleghorn and Thomas Pringle, to become the publisher of a new monthly magazine which they had projected. He consented, and in April, 1817, the first number of *The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine* appeared. It was conducted with little spirit or ability, and after six numbers of it had been published, the editors, who resented Blackwood's interference with their functions, were obliged to abandon their office. Blackwood now took the editorship into his own hands, and in October, 1817, appeared the first number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. "It needed," says the biographer of Christopher North, "no advertising trumpet to let the world know that a new reign (a reign of terror in its way) had begun. . . . Among a considerable variety of papers, most of them able and interesting, it contained not less than three of a kind well calculated to arouse curiosity and to give deep offence to sections more or less extensive of the reading public." The first was a most unwarrantable assault on Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, which was judged to be a "most execrable" performance, and its author a miserable compound of "egotism and malignity." The second was an even more

unjustifiable attack on Leigh Hunt, who was spoken of as a "profligate creature," a person without reverence either for God or man. The third was the famous "Chaldee manuscript." The effect of such a bomb-shell of personal caricature upon the small society of Edinburgh can now hardly be realised. No one attempted then to say that "Ebony" was harmless, inoffensive, or dull. Its great success led to new ventures, and in February, 1830, to *The New Monthly*, London, and *Metropolitan* was added the once brilliant and irresistible *Fraser's*. William Maginn, the son of an Irish pedagogue, born at Cork in 1793, and trained at Trinity College, Dublin, was the chief inspirer of its sulphurous early policy, after experience gained on Bentley's, Colburn's, Jerdan's *Literary Gazette*, and *Blackwood*. He and a fellow briefless, *nommé* Hugh Fraser, are said to have sketched the future of the magazine during a walk down Regent Street, and they succeeded in enlisting Maclise, Thackeray, Hook, Galt, Lockhart, Cunningham, Froude, Kingsley, Carlyle, and the excellent Father Prout, sooner or later, among contributors. Billy Maginn, identified for ever with the learned, thriftless, witty, and unwise Captain Shandon of *Pendennis*, died in 1842. One of the staunchest Fraserians for the next four-and-twenty years was Francis Sylvester Mahony (Father Prout), another native of Cork, who made Tommy Moore his butt, inventing the most wonderful Latin and French poems in order to plague Tom with bogus charges of plagiarism. In some of his own melodious verses, such as the famous *Shandon Bells*, he is not so very far, some may think, from the poor Irish melodist whose champagne he called gooseberry. As light verseman, translator, and parodist he has had few rivals. Thackeray, his best friend, comes first, then Calverley, Praed, Locker, Lang, Dobson, and Seaman.

At the close of 1859 a new departure was made by the almost simultaneous appearance of two new admirably written and illustrated monthly magazines, *Macmillan's* and *The Cornhill*, which still, though surrounded by many rivals, pursue their career vigorously. The publication of the first number of *Macmillan* preceded by a month the first number of *The Cornhill*. When Macaulay died, the first number of *Cornhill* was found open before him.

The issue of cheap periodicals for the million was inaugurated by the publication of the first number of *Chambers's Journal*, February 4th, 1832. Other cheap periodicals had been started previously, but they had not been of sufficient excellence to ensure a large enough sale to render them remunerative and permanent. The *Journal*, consisting of four large folio pages of excellent and instructive matter at the low price of three-halfpence, was at once a great success, and a sale of over 30,000 copies soon rose to 50,000. Among its most successful immediate imitators were *The Penny Magazine* and *The Weekly Instructor*. The excellent *Cyclopædia of English Literature* was started by the brothers Chambers in 1842 and their *Encyclopædia* in 1859. Among typical contributors to these works were R. Carruthers, Mrs. S. C. Hall, and the Howitts, William and Mary, the possessors of some secret charm of style which lent an appearance of verdure to their most desperate exploits in book-making, and enabled them in happy moments to approach the effect which Miss Mitford produces of being idyllic minor poets in masquerade. Mary Howitt completed the cycle from Quaker to Catholic, and was buried at Monte Testaccio, Rome, in her eighty-ninth year in 1888. The Howitts' son-in-law, Alaric Watts, the elegant extractor, was the pioneer of the literature of tit-bits. Among the prosperous rivals to the brothers Chambers were Charles Knight (1791—1873), the founder of *The Plain Englishman*, *The Penny Magazine*, *The Penny Cyclopædia* (1838), and *The English Cyclopædia* (1854), and Dionysius Lardner (1793—1859), editor of the notorious *Cabinet Cyclopædia*, initiated in 1829, and including among its contributors Mackintosh (England), Scott (Scotland), Moore (Ireland), Thirlwall (Greece), Sir Nicholas Harris Nicholas (Chronology), Sismondi, Southey, Gleig, Forster, Herschel, Baden Powell, De Morgan, Henslow, and nearly all the literary and scientific celebrities of the day.

CHAPTER XI

THOMAS CARLYLE

"Carlyle's autobiographical writings, with all their display of superficial infirmities, are at least so full of human nature as to be unsurpassable for interest even in the most fascinating department of literature."—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

THOMAS CARLYLE, the son of James Carlyle, a village mason, was born December 4th, 1795, at Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire. At the age of five he went to the village school, learning all that was to be taught there, and at the age of nine he was transferred to Annan Grammar School, where he made himself thoroughly efficient in French and Latin, reading both fluently. In 1809 he started on his eighty-mile walk to Edinburgh University, where it was his parents' wish that he should qualify for the ministry, an idea which Carlyle never looked upon with favour, but did not abandon till 1817, when he went to pay his annual fee for enrolment at the Divinity Hall. At the University he showed a decided taste for geometry, probably on account of his attachment to Prof. (afterwards Sir John) Leslie, and the mathematical teachership at Annan Academy becoming vacant, he succeeded in obtaining the post at £70 a year. He soon afterwards accepted the mastership of a school at Kirkcaldy, where he first met Edward Irving, who held a like position at a rival school in the town; the two became inseparable friends, and Carlyle had free access to Irving's library, reading Gibbon and other historical books. In Kirkcaldy, too, he became enamoured of Margaret Gordon, the original of Blumine in *Sartor Resartus*. When Irving left Kirkcaldy Carlyle resigned also, and having saved £70, went back to Edinburgh, where, in order to pursue his studies in mineralogy (a course which he had taken up) the more thoroughly, he learned the German language, eking out his small savings by teaching and translating scientific pamphlets.

Early in 1819 Carlyle became acquainted with Dr. Brewster, editor of *The Edinburgh*

Encyclopædia, and wrote several articles for this work, and in 1824 he published the translation of Legendre's *Elements of Geometry*, to which he added an essay on "Proportion," "as good a substitute for the fifth book of Euclid as could be given in speech." In 1822 he became private tutor in the family of Mr. Charles Buller, Charles Buller the younger, who afterwards distinguished himself in Parliament, being his pupil.

He got this post through Irving, and while he held it wrote the *Life of Schiller*, and translated *Wilhelm Meister*, besides shorter romances from Tieck, Richter, Musæus, and Fouqué. Among the society he met at the Bulls' he naturally unthawed and unstiffened not a little. He went to London on a visit to Irving, saw Coleridge, Lamb ("once enough," he asseverates), Hazlitt, and Barry Cornwall. He complains already of being bitted and spurred by dyspepsia, but he achieves a first visit to Paris and haunts the famous scenes which he was to commemorate for the English-speaking world. Barry Cornwall gave him an introduction to Jeffrey at Edinburgh, and Jeffrey was sufficiently impressed by the united batteries of the pent-up philosopher and his animated wife to give Carlyle an occasional hearing in *The Edinburgh* in spite of his "mystic" propensities, though he could not be induced to keep his hands altogether off his work. Carlyle had married at Templand, Jane Welsh, six years his junior, a much-admired and intensely vivacious girl, who did everything cleverly and could make a story about a broom-handle entertaining. Her quickness of perception and very literary susceptibility, no less than a certain nervous irritability, rendered her in some ways a very unfit companion for



After the Painting by J. McNeill Whistler.

Thomas Carlyle

Carlyle, whose bilious and highly self-centred temperament needed the complement of laughter and insensibility. All of Carlyle's best work, however, was done during the forty years that followed this marriage, and no small part of the stimulus was attributable directly to her. Leaving Comely Bank, Edinburgh, early in 1828, the married pair went to live at Craigenputtock, a small property belonging to Carlyle's mother-in-law, fourteen miles from Dumfries, the farm attached to which was let. In a solitude comparable to that of "Crusoe on his island" he here lived, in his own self-appreciative words, "a humble russet-coated epic of seven years." Apart from some important essays which paved the way directly for *The French Revolution*, here was excogitated¹ and written the brilliant and fantastic gospel of clothes, showing how all visible things are mere emblems, a suit of clothes or raiment, to be put on for a season and then to be laid off. The philosophy serves as a kind of clothes-horse to the ideas which his solitude generated in such confusing abundance, while the main props, as in so many of his best works, are unmistakably autobiographical.

In *Sartor* Carlyle found himself as regards expression in the weird psalmodic style which the martinets of the Old Guard (in *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh*) found so disgusting, and which Taine found so curiously entertaining. Here, however, in this diction and style and manner are to be found the sources of his strength, here and in that temperamental glow of earnestness which keeps the reader's attention firmly fixed even upon platitudes. Of these, it must be admitted, there are a good many, for most of the prophet's doctrines are commonplace enough, and in regard to the others, as Jeffrey candidly informed him, Carlyle was not nearly so original as he imagined. Not a few qualities of his humour derived from Sterne and Richter; what was absolutely new to the English prose reader was the rhythm and intonation of his native Annandale.

The failure of *Sartor Resartus* and the "unsteadiness" of review editors prompted a move from Craigenputtock. Thomas the Doubter though he was, he summoned the resolve to burn his boats and proceed forthwith to the conquest of the rotten multitudinous canaille of cockneydom.

In 1834 he was settled at Cheyne Row, Chelsea,

with no definite prospect of income since he refused all Whig harness, but with £200 to £300 in the bank to go on with. His powers of sulphurous monologue, his rabid insight, startled every one who came into contact with him: he was now thirty-nine and worked grimly on "Under the great Taskmaster's Eye" at *The Revolution*, to which he stuck like a burr, meanwhile "living upon nothing," with "gleams of a work of art hovering past me."

His theory of History as the essence of Great Lives was shaping itself in the form of this book, and so we get in his "apotheosis of Sans Culottism" a series or a gallery of portraits of the most extraordinary vividness—the King, the Queen, Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre, Marat, Lafayette. Like most great histories it is somewhat careless of minutiae, but after the great work of Taine it is still perhaps the most stimulating work on the period it celebrates. On no one was its influence more marked than upon Carlyle's greatest contemporary, Charles Dickens. It first exhibited Carlyle's extraordinary power of artistic concentration. His whole life was wrapped up in the book, which he talked to and regarded as a sentient being. And it was endeared to him by a terrible accident. The manuscript of the first volume was lent to John Stuart Mill; Mill lent it to his Egeria, Mrs. Taylor; and Mrs. Taylor's maid by inadvertence destroyed it. There was no rough draft. Mill came one night to Cheyne Row to announce the disaster, pale as Hector's ghost, and "stayed three mortal hours." Carlyle, who if one of the most querulous was also one of the bravest of men, bore it like a hero. He would accept only £100 compensation from Mill. After a long rest, in the course of which he read through Captain Marryat, he set to work again, and finished the whole book by 1837.

Such a book could hardly have any public prepared for it—the public would wait until it learned its merits from loud and persistent advocates. Such advocates appeared not from among the erudite but from among the most imaginative writers of the day—Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson. The accredited reviewers and pundits were obliged to admit that there had arisen a new star, of baleful and ominous aspect maybe, but a star of the first magnitude in English literature. To tide over the fiscal difficulty a group of ladies headed by Miss

¹ Compare, however, Swift's *Sermon on a Broom-stick*.

Martineau, who had been impressed by the thunders of Carlylean rhetoric and denunciation, arranged a course of lectures for this loud new lion at Willis's Rooms. Carlyle gave a grumbling consent. Belgravia was canvassed and the lectures in May, 1837, were a resounding success, the proceeds (£135) enabling Carlyle with courage to continue the literary life. The struggle of this phase was over and the victory won, but the tension had been very great and the reaction was dangerously so.

Already famous in Boston, Carlyle was on the verge of becoming a lion in London. *Sartor* was resuscitated by Fraser in 1838, his more important essays were collected from the reviews in 1839, his third course of Lectures on "Heroes and Hero Worship" (first published in 1841) greatly extended his fame. He was becoming the Hesperus of exclusive dinner-tables, the prey of ornamented witches, as he described *grandes dames* such as Lady Holland, who looked at him with carnivorous views. Distinguished people began to haunt Cheyne Row. Mill, Lecky, Mazzini, Sterling, Fonblanque, Thirlwall, Maurice, Dickens, Forster, Froude were soon among his friends or disciples. Assiduous too was the somewhat incongruous figure of Leigh Hunt idly melodious as bird on bough.

The philosopher felt that he was not quite so proof against the flattery of the rich as he ought to have been (a new top dressing not attainable without peril, he called it) even at the time he was denouncing their organised frivolities and ejaculating with the cow in the fable, "Gie me a pickle pease straw." Henceforth his literary activity was to take two main directions: first, tracts for the times against modern tendencies, especially against that all-pervading, self-complacent talk about modern progress amidst the general disintegration of creeds, orders, and systems, the "rushings down of revolutionism" which he denounced indiscriminately; secondly, a cyclopean exposition of Cæsarism, and the convertibility of Might and Right which he came to regard apparently as the only possible remedy. With the first end in view he penned *Chartism* (1839), *Past and Present* (1843), *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850), *Niagara and After*, denouncing the rights of majorities, extended suffrage, the beautiful Nigger Agony, and all the nostrums of palliative liberal philosophy and political economy—the dismal science. Turning then savagely away

from a generation saturated with cant, with spleen undiverted and unrelieved, he wrote for a future generation, with the second aim ostensibly, his *Cromwell* and his *Friedrich*. He began the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* in 1842, and completed it on August 26th, 1845. Even then it let water in and he had to put some new hoops round the bucket. It was an enthusiastic advocacy of Cromwell as constable of the parish, condoning every tyranny, cruelty, and crafty ambition of that astute autocrat. On the other hand it exhibited Carlyle's characteristic insight, which enabled him to break through the crust of conventional presentation and to make Cromwell and his age intelligible in a far greater measure than ever before.

Begun in the winter of 1851-2 and continued with a dogged persistence of growling and barking and snapping for nearly fourteen years, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great* is the history of one of the most odious and unscrupulous despots of modern times in terms of unstinted and unqualified eulogy. It reinforces and confirms the view to which its author was apparently gravitating, that national expansion under a great man of action, a conqueror for preference, under the motto "My country right or wrong," is the one condition of tolerable existence upon the planet. Consequently he devotes fourteen years to a microscopic survey of the biology of the Hohenzollern dynasty during the eighteenth century, with military, political, and biographical anecdotes of the period. If Carlyle's method be the exploration of History by flashes of lightning, we admit that we should prefer to study it by almost any other illuminant. The colossal tediousness and triviality of much of the detail reduces the book in parts to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the hero theory. Contrariwise, as a monument of curious research and picturing power on a narrow field it is unrivalled; the portraits of Frederick William, a personality as actual and as rich in humour as Mr. Shandy, of Frederick himself, of his generals and of Voltaire, are painted to the life with the warm hues and glowing colours of fiction.

The crusted acerbity of humour which had shredded off to some extent after the completion of *The French Revolution* returned to stay during these fourteen years of creative work and of conflict with intractable material and a vile world (mostly populated by fools), bad

pens, bad ink, bad paper, and incurable ill-temper. A gloom of mood which most people would have borne in silence if only for the reason that it would have been indescribable, now seemed to settle down upon Carlyle, who found ample means to give articulate expression to his sensations. His letters, in fact, become more and more one continuous jeremiad about broken sleep, curtainless beds, sanhedrims of cats and dogs and brood sows, demon fowl, greasy victual, ugly people, and consequent awful mental agony. The antiphony of these agonies and antagonies, the sulky despair, the rampaging and storming at others and their "cursed ways of going on," made the care of him eventually resemble that of a madhouse patient to the supersensitive woman he tormented so callously yet loved really so well. Trying as they found it to live together, the more they lived apart the greater the friction grew, and it seemed at times as if the much-tried pair must fly asunder. A counter-irritant to Carlyle's imaginary Tartarus was at length found in his wife's own very real and complete nervous breakdown—leading imperceptibly to the terrible and unexpected shock of her death in 1866. In a flash of lightning it broke upon him now that he had broken his wife's health and happiness by his unruly flytings and ferocities; hence the seemingly exaggerated remorse of his later letters and reminiscences.

Shooting Niagara, and After, a belated Latter-Day Pamphlet which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1867, was to be the last and most intemperate of his manifestoes on the Condition of England question. But the wonderful power of etching a vignette which makes a thumbnail sketch by "Craigenputtock" as much to be prized by a literary connoisseur as a Rembrandt etching by a virtuoso of the graphic arts, survived to the last and is seen fully as much in his *Letters* and his *Reminiscences* as in *The French Revolution*, *Frederick*, or the *Life of Sterling*. Famous, rich and inconsistently philanthropic, the flying target of all kinds of extraneous attempts to do him honour, Carlyle remained a familiar figure at Chelsea for the fifteen last years of his life. An experiment in living together with his brother John (the translator of Dante) had to be given up after a very brief trial, but he was far less denunciatory than of old, and disciples and admirers sought him out generally with complete impunity. Molten words issued from him almost to the

last and many hearts were kindled. A thrill ran through the land on February 5th, 1881, when it heard that Thomas Carlyle was dead. Sepulture in the Abbey was a popular demand, but characteristically he had decreed Ecclefechan, where he was laid among the kindred whose trust and affection he had reciprocated so egotistically yet so greatly.

As a child we are told he was much given to crying, as a man he was but too prone to grotesque lamentations over common bodily ills. The strong sense of sin to which he was heir was evidently correlative to his stern sense of duty; similarly no doubt his vividness and his disconnectedness, his intensity and his lack of catholicity are correlative. With his northern love of learning and strong family feeling he also plainly inherited a starkness of humour, a stiff conceit of himself and a fondness for the scolding and browbeating of others. His inveterate practice of haranguing gave him little opportunity of appreciating the point of view of the other side, and consequently his prejudices, his repulsions, his oppositions and antagonisms, clothed as they are in torrents of fiery eloquence, are too often felt to be not merely bilious but absolutely blind. Such vehement and explosive heats for and against are most injurious to any deliberate unity and rotundity of exposition, and Carlyle is thus, like Ruskin, a most incoherent philosopher. He detested the rationalism and the symmetry of such methodists of thought as Mill, Buckle, Darwin, Spencer, Ricardo, Austin, and George Eliot—mere chatter he called it, though he was perhaps half uneasily or even jealously conscious of the superior ratiocinative powers of such thinkers. It is amusingly characteristic to perceive from his letters what "poor devils" most of his highly gifted friends are compassionately adjudged to be. Thus it is "poor sawdustish Mill," editor of a "crawling of creeping things," whose "mangy laughter" is suggestive of a proclivity to the itch; "insuperable proclivity to gin in poor old Lamb"; Newman has the brain of a moderate, Keble of a diminutive rabbit; De Quincey is an animalcule to be kept in a box and only taken out to talk; George Eliot is a chattering woman, Lewes an ape, Darwin a purr thin fool, Lecky a willow-pattern man, and similarly we hear of poor muddle-brained twisted and strained Maurice, hugger-mugger Hunt, poor Tyndall, and poor little Browning. So too his habit of

looking at his own time through the wrong end of the telescope, despairing of justice and amelioration and bemoaning the rose-water imbecilities of so-called contemporary progress grew upon him insensibly, and his one-string effects so beset him and besotted him that the whole thing tumbled off at last into sheer insincerity. A justifiable exposure of Rousseau nonsense about the perfectibility of man had degenerated into a sulphurous denunciation of all philanthropic ideals, a blind fury of tearing off the branches in order to find the tree. What this all goes to show is that as an intellect Carlyle had not wholly got beyond the stage of instinct. He was not an apostle of a school of ideas like the two Mills, nor was he a pioneer to discover new channels for thought with Spencer and Darwin. His instinct against the self-satisfied rationalism, the priggish solemnity and over-regimentation of ideas in his age, was, we believe, fundamentally sound. And if not in the first rank as thinker, reasoner, or critic, he was very great indeed as a moral force, as a prophetic power indicating the

futility of expecting a generalisation or two of the philosophical radicals to embrace and comprehend the whole universe. His amazing opulence of imaginative expression and his sinister habit of introducing nitroglycerine into the mimic warfare of verbal debate betrayed the literalists and the rationalists into taking him far more seriously than was necessary or desirable. His literary malice, his double echo of irony, what Lamb might have called his abundance of fun, have too generally been overlooked. Henry James, however, did not hesitate to call him an inveterate comedian.

Greatest of all, Carlyle appears to us as a biographer. His insight into personality can hardly be exaggerated. Its acuteness in fixing upon cracks and crevices is sometimes almost diabolical, and seems to partake almost at times of the infallible and hideous penetration of the querulous and evil-tempered scold. The result, however, is a quantity of biographical and autobiographical writing which is of the very stuff of human nature. It will not combine. It forms an element by itself.¹

¹ The main authorities for Carlyle's Life are his own *Reminiscences*,* brought out by James Anthony Froude (2 vols., 1881); *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of his Life** (2 vols., 1882); *Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London** (2 vols., 1884), both, including numerous letters and documents, written and edited by J. A. Froude; and *The Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (1883 and 1904, in all 5 vols.). The outspoken truthfulness of documents and opinions caused the utmost consternation when the volumes described above were given to the public, and Froude was for a long time excommunicated by Carlyle's friends for giving to the world one of the most interesting and lifelike contributions that biography and autobiography in England have ever known. Biographical and critical studies have since grown apace; among the more noteworthy are those of J. B. Crozier, in *My Inner Life*; Richard Garnett (1887); F. J. Harrison (1894); Henry James, in *Literary Remains*; A. H. Japp (1865); Ed. Jenks (1888); Larkin, *The Open Secret of Carlyle's Life* (1886); Jeaffreson; W. S. Lilly, *Four Humorists* (1895); David Masson (1885); B. W. Matz; H. J. Nicoll (1885); John Nichol (1892); S. J. Reid (1881); J. M. Robertson, in *Modern Humanists* (1891); R. H. Shepherd (1881); Symington (1886); Wylie (1881); Hensel (1901); J. M. Sloan, *The Carlyle Country* (1904); Gazeau, *L'Impérialisme anglais* (1903); to which may be added the amusing satire contained in Taine's *L'Idéalisme anglais* of 1864.

BOOK VII
THE AGE OF THE NOVEL

CHAPTER I

THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL: BULWER AND DISRAELI: NAVAL AND MILITARY NOVELS: THE PREDECESSORS OF MR. PICKWICK

"The main question concerning a novel is: Did it amuse? Were you surprised at dinner coming so soon? Did you mistake eleven for ten, and twelve for eleven? Were you too late for dress?"—SYDNEY SMITH.

"I might as well attempt to gather up the foam of the sea as to convey an idea of the extraordinary language in which Disraeli clothed his description. There were at least five words in every sentence that must have been very much astonished at the use they were put to, and yet no others, apparently, could so well have conveyed the idea. He talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post, every muscle in action."—N. P. WILLIS.

I

INTO the gap between Scott and the great constellation of Victorian fiction fall the two interesting and significant figures of Bulwer and Disraeli. Both of them are more modern in their application of ideas to life than was the case with their greater compeers—Dickens and Thackeray. Both had talents of the highest order, and both alike were distracted by the scope of their ambitions and the extravagance of their youthful expenditure from that single-minded devotion and concentration which absolute pre-eminence in letters postulates.

Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer, youngest son of one of the Bulwers of Heyden Hall, in Norfolk, by a daughter of the ancient house of the Lyttons of Knebworth, was born in Baker Street, London, on May 25th, 1803. Like Disraeli, he was a Londoner by birth, and by education the product of small schools and private tuition. In 1822, however, he went up to Trinity, Cambridge, when he distinguished himself as a debater along with W. M. Praed, Maurice and Charles Buller. In 1825 he left Cambridge, had several singular flirtations, one with Lady Caroline Lamb, became naturalised at Paris, and graduated as a finished dandy and "milor Anglais." He wrote Byronic verses, boxed, fenced, and gambled. In 1827 he made what proved to be a very unhappy and ill-timed marriage with Rosina Doyle Wheeler, and settled at Woodcot House, near

Pangbourne. He was already a fluent writer, and doubled his income by magazine articles.

Scott was still writing when Bulwer swam into the horizon in 1827, otherwise the field was remarkably clear for a new novelist, Miss Edgeworth being mute, and Jane Austen dead. The anonymous *Falkland* was a sufficiently raw Wertherian romance: nevertheless, it gained for its author, a youth of twenty-four, a commission from the great novel impresario, Colburn, to write a novel for £500. The result was *Pelham*, a book as precocious as its dandy hero—Bulwer's exotic self. The hot-bloodedness of the style, the astounding vivacity and bewildering omniscience of the hero, made it pre-eminently a book for aspiring youth, and, after a short period of probation, it eventually eclipsed both *Vivian Grey* and *Tremaine*, and became indisputably the book of the year. The need to follow the line of least resistance towards compassing large sums of money now that he was a married man, deprived of the allowance of a thousand a year which his mother had hitherto allowed him, impelled Bulwer to write a series of criminal fictions in which the limelight is skilfully concentrated upon chivalric highwaymen (*Paul Clifford*), high-minded murderers (*Eugene Aram*), sentimental demireps, and other picturesque villains.

In 1834-5 he began to show his versatility by producing two historical novels, familiarly known from that day to this, *The Last Days*

of *Pompeii* and *Rienzi*: both bear the same kind of relation to Southern life and colouring that a coloured photograph does to nature, but they are undeniably effective. In 1839 he made another fresh reputation with an anonymous drama, full of crude sentimentalism, written in fifteen days, and produced by Macready with notable success at Covent Garden as *The Lady of Lyons*. It was followed by *Richelieu* and *Money*, and the longevity of the trio is probably the strongest testimony to Lytton's cleverness that could possibly be found.

In 1841 the Dickensian influence is already apparent in one of his most successful novels, *Night and Morning*, which serves as a link between the earlier novels and *The Caxtons*, with its sequel, *My Novel*—two second-rate but highly successful imitations of Sterne (1850-51). *The Caxtons* (and, later, once more, *The Coming Race*) was published anonymously and loudly acclaimed as the success of a budding genius. After he succeeded to the Knebworth estate upon his mother's death in 1843, and became known as Bulwer-Lytton, he produced two long and on the whole meritorious, if somewhat heavy, historical compositions, known as *The Last of the Barons* (1843) and *Harold* (1848)—this last gives a memorable presentment of the group around the last of the old English kings at the Battle of Hastings—and a somewhat cheaply finished satire called *The New Timon*, which provoked the "black blood" of Tennyson to terrible wrath. Early in the 'sixties he returned from his laurels in the political field, including the colonial secretaryship, followed by a peerage, to his old facile industry as a novelist, his love of the mysterious and the spectral, which had already produced *Zanoni* and the powerful *Haunters and Haunted*, giving birth in 1862 to the *Strange Story*, in which an attempt is made to give a semi-scientific colouring to old-fashioned necromancy, in the lore of which Lytton was singularly learned. He also produced, in anticipation of H. G. Wells, a clever forecast of the society of the future called *The Coming Race* (1872), which made a great success, though he kept the secret of the authorship until his death. His very last novels, *Kenelm Chillingly* and *The Parisians*, which deal with old sentiments and modern tendencies, are among his very best. Mr. Chillingly Mivers, the editor of *The Londoner*, deserves to rank with Pelham, the puppy

himself. Lytton died at Torquay on January 18th, 1873, in the arms of his only son, the poet Owen Meredith, and future Viceroy of India.

Lytton worked industriously all his life at a most ornate versatility, and the measure of his success, whether as novelist, poet, dramatist, man of fashion, statesman, orator, pamphleteer, satirist, scholar, or historian (we ought perhaps to have recorded his efforts as translator of Horace and Schiller, and as a rival of Thirlwall and Grote) has been very diversely estimated. In regard to his work as a novelist, the divergence has been greatest—between the critics who sneer and the public who buy. The public are, no doubt, right in liking him, appraising him, as they are apt to appraise a shop, by the number of its counters. Sawedwadgeorgearl-litnbulwig, as Thackeray so boyishly revelled in dubbing him, was in short the first of the great race of utility novelists, so common in our day, who devoted talent of a high order to popular fiction. The Master-Builder of the *Bow Bells Novelette* and the scare-head "fooliton," his success was reared upon his rapid adaptation of the best model to the instant commercial needs of fiction. The Byronic pose, the Hugonic shudder, the Dumas dagger, the Dickensian tear, the Disraelian glitter—all are thrown into his melting-pot. He even tried to emulate Scott's historical big bow-wow—he, the last of the Byrons, twanging the threnody of *The Last of the Barons*. *Contrefaçons* all, but so cleverly done that they have almost, if not quite, an artistic value of their own.

When he says in his picturesque way that he was born in a library, all that Lord Beaconsfield means is that he was born under the roof of his father, the Monkbarns of Literary Curiosities. In 1804 Isaac D'Israeli was living in Theobalds Road, and here on December 21st, in a house now marked by a tablet, opposite Gray's Inn Gardens, Benjamin Disraeli was born. He was received into the Jewish Church with the usual rite at the Spanish Synagogue in Bevis Marks, was taught in suburban schools, and lived the life of a London boy mainly in Bloomsbury Square, where his father had a large house. He had been baptised into the Christian community in 1817, one of his godfathers being the historian, Sharon Turner. Impertinent and flippant, never at a loss for a compliment or a repartee, he was early hailed as an original and

a wit. Benjamin was destined for the law, and spent his early years, after a private education, in a solicitor's office. But law and bad jokes up to forty, and an eventual prospect of brilliant success, were not to his mind. Before he was twenty he had astonished not a few of the literary celebrities of the day, Croker, Rogers, Lockhart, and John Murray (who dispatched him on a literary embassy to the chieftain of Abbotsford), by the fine faculties which he concealed under those startling fopperies. In the same year (1825) he is flashing a quill in his father's library at Bradenham (whither the family had removed from Bloomsbury) over the rapid pages of *Vivian Grey*, and the audacious motto, “Why, then, the world's mine oyster.” Resolutely determined to play to the great world and not to lack an audience, Disraeli at this time kept close down to the foot-lights and attitudinised freely and frankly. For purposes of self-advertisement he calculated that affectation paid better than wit. Threatened by illness, he made a Byronic tour to Spain, Malta and the East. As with Byron and Napoleon, the East exercised a profound fascination over him. His imagination was deeply stirred, and he sent back glowing letters full of fantastic doings. In February, 1831, he was in the Holy City, the goal of his pilgrimage, where he attained the full use of his brain for the first time. On his return he published those extraordinary projections of his youthful personality, *Contarini Fleming* (1832) and *Alroy* (1833), the material embodied in which was recast to some extent later on in *Lothair* and *Tancred*—just as *Vivian Grey* and its sequel *The Young Duke* (books written by boys, their author denominated them) were remelted in his mind when he was at work upon *Coningsby*. These over-adorned and somewhat too Bulweresque fictions together with his amazingly clever political burlesques, *Ionian in Heaven*, *The Infernal Marriage*, and *Popanilla*, and a number of sparkling pamphlets such as his amusing and caustic denunciation of the Orleanist *coup d'état* in 1832, were the products of feverish energy, and the least effect they had was to make a literary lion of Disraeli. He was seen in company with Bulwer, D'Orsay, and the Hopes of Deepdene. He was familiar in the circle of Lady Blessington, Caroline Norton, and Tom Moore.

There is extremely little of the pulpit, or lectern, or desk about *Coningsby*, and still less

of the poppy. What delights one with it is its daring, the vivacity and elation of its bounding youth, the irresistible *entrainement* of its tirades. As an epigrammatist “Dizzy” owes much of his champagne no doubt to Byron, Sydney Smith, and the wits of *The London Magazine*, but his phrasing is more calculated to remind the attentive reader of the wit-arabesque of Horry Walpole than any other writer within our recollection. By how many have Disraeli's own jaunty inversions and ingenuities of contortion been imitated! He resembles Walpole still more in the malicious ingenuity with which he twists the historical Scriptures and wrenches them out of the hands of their authorised but not vivacious interpreters, to suit his own argument and purpose. Of the great “trilogy,” *Coningsby*, *Sybil*, *Tancred*, it would be difficult to say which is the more characteristic, though *Sybil* is in our opinion the most wholly attractive of the three. In *Tancred*, however, there are in the early portions signs of a greater maturity, both in satire and extravaganza, than he shows elsewhere. Never in the *genre* of exquisite mock-heroic has the passage been surpassed in which the *cordon bleu*, temporarily bereft of the powers of “composition” owing to the lack of appreciation of his art, is depicted alone in the cook's room gazing in listless vacancy on the fire, overwhelmed by that exhaustion which follows acute sensibility and the over-tension of the creative faculty. One among many episodes in *Tancred*, this of the star chef Leander—so far surpassing in brilliancy of conception the Mirobolant of Thackeray—serves as a straw to indicate the gradual refinement that was progressing in his style along with a general ripening of literary faculty. It seems to us unquestionable that Disraeli might have gone on to produce novels of the very highest rank. Unhappily for letters, for England, and humanity, with inferior insight to Dickens, the one man in contemporary England who surpassed him in emotional vivacity and in both speaking and writing power, Disraeli elected to run the risk of achieving greatness—synonymous in his own words with influencing the minds of his generation—by the precarious instrumentality of our outworn party system (which Dickens so cordially and so justly despised). *Lothair* (published in 1870 after a brief interlude in the political duel, and containing what is in some respects his most finished presentation of English society) is

virtually a confession of abandoned ideals. He died in London on April 19th (now known as Primrose Day), 1881, just two-and-a-half

months after Carlyle, whose obscenities of abuse he had repaid with the sphinx-like generosity that became him.

II

"The lordliest life on earth" a hundred years ago—that of an officer in his Majesty's navy! The sense of power, the capacity of infinite resource, the combination of qualities necessary to produce a first-rate naval officer—all these things entered into the estimate which the mere landsman was compelled to form of the men who seconded Jervis and Nelson and Nelson's "band of brothers." Smollett was literally the founder of this famous nautical school; but when he wrote, the navy was a *terra incognita* to the nation: naval men were regarded by the reading public as a strange race of amphibious monsters, and the achievements of naval squadrons had endeared the service neither to the respect nor to the affection of the mass of Englishmen. When prize-money rolled in by thousands and enabled successful post-captains to found county families, the old indifference was soon exchanged for a keen solicitude. Formerly the "fool of the family" had been destined from boyhood for India or holy orders. Now it was the object of every house to have a cadet in the navy. Sir Walter treated the profession with exalted respect, and Jane Austen's favourite hero was a naval officer. From the establishment of the peace in 1815 time was ripe for the naval novelist. As usual, however, after a great war, preoccupation is followed by a period of aversion, and it was until 1829 that the first great delineator of naval manners and maritime exploits was discovered in Captain Marryat.

FREDERICK MARRYAT—born in Great George Street, Westminster, on July 10th, 1792—served almost continually and with much credit in the Royal Navy from 1806 to 1830. Early experiences are told in three of his best books, *Frank Mildmay*, *Midshipman Easy*, and *Peter Simple*; the skilful commander Captain Savage, in the novel last named, was Cochrane, Lord Dundonald, under whom Marryat served as a boy of fifteen on the crack frigate *Imperieuse*. No battles, hardly any ship actions, but any amount of boat service in cutting out expeditions—such was the actual experience of Marryat in the navy. We gather as much from his books, which are a faithful mirror of the general nature of naval activity between Trafalgar and 1815, when no hostile fleet dared to venture out into deep water, so acknowledged and undisputed was the supremacy of our naval squadrons. Marryat was in many respects a model officer, intrepid (he saved several lives by swimming) and full of ingenuity (he is credited with a code of signals), but like most naval officers of the period he had deep-rooted grievances against the Admiralty, and at thirty-eight, after a very successful professional career, he was induced by "private affairs" to resign his ship.

The success of his first novel, *Frank Mildmay*, or *The Naval Officer*, which came out in 1829, held an important place among these private affairs; it was followed by *The King's Own* (1830), and by Marryat's purchase of a landed estate in Norfolk. Marryat now addressed himself to the task of earning money rapidly by his pen.

In 1832 he was appointed editor of *The Metropolitan Magazine*, to which he had already contributed freely at the rate of £16 a sheet. In it he produced the rambling narrative of *Newton Forster*, with its striking sea episodes and amusing stories, and during the next two years (1833-5) his four best novels, *Peter Simple* (1833), *Jacob Faithful*, *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, and *Japhet in Search of a Father*, and also *The Pacha of Many Tales*. For these, apart from the social price, he gained over a thousand apiece, and felt himself a Fortunatus, until an unsuccessful election showed him how easily his coffers might be depleted. In 1836 he transferred his work from *The Metropolitan* to *The New Monthly* at the enhanced price of £20 a sheet, and produced in it *Snarley Yow*, *The Phantom Ship*, *Poor Jack*, and *Percival Keene*. His fluency made earning easy, but like Lever, whom he resembled in the art of collecting, embellishing, and recollecting stories, Marryat was what Carlyle would call a "very expensive herr," and was constrained to make periodical dashes to Lausanne, Boulogne, or Brussels. In 1837-9 he went further afield to America, and wrote the long captious book about American manners, which the literary convention and the publishers of that day (of Trollopes, Hamiltons, Coopers, and Basil Halls) expected. It was a heavy book, but served his purpose, and brought him in a clear £2,000. He poured large sums into an experimental farm at Langham, Norfolk, whither he eventually retired and where, after contending with many anxieties and the sharp blow of

his son's loss in the wreck of the *Avenger*, he died on August 9th, 1848. Marryat's work has been laughed at for its facility and *invraisemblance* by such censors as Poe and Bret Harte, Meredith and Carlyle, whom the light-hearted post-captain had the misfortune to have spoken of once as "Mr. Carlisle, author of *Sartor Resartus*." But he had many gifts of a high order, good spirits, informing a genuine talent for humorous dialogue and eccentric portraiture—and we must remember that he wrote before Dickens.

Historical works upon the Peninsular War such as the chapters by Southey on the History of the War, written between 1823 and 1832, and slight half-comical sketches of military life such as David Roberts's *Military Adventures*

of *Johnny Newcome*, precluded the regular development of the limited group of military novelists. The great master of this school was and is Charles Lever, who not only wrote some battlepieces with backgrounds and accompaniments such as Napier himself might have envied, but had glimpses of the pomp and pageantry of eighteenth-century warfare, revealed in that wonderful chapter in *Maurice Tiernay*, entitled "A Remnant of Fontenoy," which Thackeray himself with the example of Lever before him had much ado to approach in the vastly better sustained pages of *Esmond*. His flightiness and indolence in revising alone prevented Lever (who never himself smelt powder on the field) from becoming the generalissimo of this branch of literature.

CHARLES JAMES LEVER, second son of James Lever, a Dublin architect, was born in the Irish capital on August 31st, 1806. His descent was purely English. His escapades at Trinity College, Dublin, where he remained from 1822 to 1827, are used as material, and very good material they make, for the early chapters of *Charles O'Malley*. The inimitable Frank Webber of that novel (ancestor of Foker and Mr. Bouncer) was a college friend, Robert Boyle, later an Irish parson. They sang ballads of their own composing to the Dublin crowd after the manner of Fergusson or of Goldsmith, though they did not suffer from Noll's pecuniary straits, and to these scenes Lever referred in the best of his later novels, *Lord Kilgobbin*. Before seriously entering upon the medical studies for which he was destined, Lever visited America as an unqualified surgeon on an emigrant ship, and has drawn upon some of his experiences in *Con Oregan*, *Arthur O'Leary*, and *Roland Cashel*. Afterwards he studied and travelled from Gottingen to Weimar, thence to Vienna; he loved the German student life, and several of his merry songs, such as *The Pope he Loved a Merry Life*, are on Student-liked patterns; later, as *Tom Burke*, *Tony Butler*, and *Maurice Tiernay* demonstrate, his sympathies become decidedly French. On returning to Dublin he got an appointment from the Board of Health in co. Clare, and his visit determined the vein of his first (that all-important) book, *Harry Lorrequer*. Shortly afterwards he met William Hamilton Maxwell, the titular founder of the military novel. In February, 1837, he began running *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* through the pages of the recently established *Dublin University Magazine* (in volume form, 1839). He now moved to a practice in Brussels, a superb place for the observation of English society a little damaged, where he encountered Major Monsoon and Captain Bubbleton, Paul Rooney and Father Tom Loftus (in *Jack Hinton*). In 1842 he returned as editor of *The Dublin University Magazine*, in which capacity he hospitably received Thackeray and grouped round him a buzzing coterie of Irish wits—the O'Sullivans, Archer Butler, Carleton, W. R. Wilde, D. F. McCarthy, Butt and others. But the Galway pace he had to keep up, the horses to maintain, the friends to entertain, the novels to write—*Charles O'Malley*, (1840) and *Jack Hinton* (1842), being rapidly followed by *Tom Burke*, *The O'Donoghue*, and *The Knight of Gwynne*—soon made his native land an impossible place for him to reside in. He wandered about continentally like his own *Daltons* or *Dodd Family Abroad* until in 1858 he was appointed English Consul at Spezzia, in 1867 exchanged for Trieste. Constantly depressed in spirit though he was, and harassed by debt and anxiety, his animal spirits made him the most delightful of companions to all he exerted himself to please, and he seldom failed to do this in company. His wit was unextinguished even by the lassitude of his last years abroad. He died at Trieste of heart disease, almost painlessly, on June 1st, 1872.

With Lever, as with nearly all novelists, his first productions were his best. They exhibit very little respect for conventional novel structure or unity of action, but are in fact little more than recitals of scenes in the life of a particular person, unconnected by any continuous intrigue. His taste in humour was robust and permeated all his best narratives with an atmosphere of quaint buffooneries and practical jokes (often quite savage enough to deserve the delicious burlesque of *Phil Fogarty*). But the buffoonery is only an excrescence, for Lever had the personal magnetism of a born story-teller, that easy flow of light description which without tedium or hurry leads up to the point, and that extraordinary memory for good stories which leaves nothing to the imagination but to invent picturesque details. When the stories began to run out, Lever began to study the technique and to learn the mechanism of his art. Unfortunately he lost that *élan* and brightness of youth which had given such incomparable animation to the best scenes in *Lorrequer* and *Charles O'Malley*.

CHAPTER II

CHARLES DICKENS

"He is unquestionably as far above all other English novelists as Shakespeare is above all other dramatists."—TENNYSON.

CHARLES JOHN HUFFAM DICKENS, second son of John and Elizabeth Dickens, was born in Commercial Road, Landport, Isle of Portsea, on February 7th, 1812. His father was then a clerk in the Navy Pay Office in Portsmouth on a salary of £80 a year. The family moved to Chatham in 1816, and during their sojourn there Charles, who had been taught to read by his mother, was frequently to be found in by-places near Rochester "with his head full of Partridge, Strap, Tom Pipes, and Sancho Panza." He was also for a year or two at school at Chatham, and an occasional visitor at the theatre there. In 1823 a move was made to Bayham Street, Camden Town, where the family had to submit to stern economies, and to submit in vain, for the father was arrested for debt and lodged in the Marshalsea Prison. Charles, who had hitherto helped his mother with the children, blacked the boots, attended the pawnshop, and done other menial work, was now sent out to earn his own living as a young hand in a blacking warehouse at a salary of six shillings a week. In a tumble-down first floor, overlooking Hungerford Stairs, for nearly two years he tied up and labelled blacking-pots, lunching off a saveloy and a penny loaf, and going to spend the Sunday with his parents in their comfortable prison, where they had the services of a "marchioness." His father emerged in 1824, and then for a brief two years Charles attended Mr. Creakle's academy in the Hampstead Road; after which he entered an attorney's office, first as an office boy, then in another Lincoln's Inn firm as a junior clerk. He was a mirthful enough youth now that the blacking memories had faded—fond of the theatre and of harmless practical jokes, but already fiercely

intent upon rising in the world. He read in leisure moments at the British Museum, learned Gurney's shorthand, and determined to be a reporter. As a reporter he acquired a remarkable facility with his pen, combined in his case with a style of the first descriptive order, graphic, and at the same time direct, and he had an actor's eye for all external peculiarities or oddities of manner or *mise en scène*. He began to think of using these powers during moments of leisure upon scenes and characters of London life. In December, 1833, what was perhaps his first effort as an independent essayist, *A Dinner at Poplar Walk*, appeared in *The Monthly Magazine*. This formed the nucleus of his first book, *Sketches by Boz*, which had attracted a certain amount of attention from acute observers. A member of the firm of Chapman & Hall had caught the name of Dickens upon the wind, discovered his address, and called upon him in his chambers at Furnival's Inn with a proposal that he should provide letterpress for a series of Nimrod sketches (the exploits of a Cockney Nimrod) which Seymour, the artist, had proposed to etch for them. *Pickwick* is thus almost unique among epoch-making books, seeing that it did not originate in the mind of the author, but was essentially a publisher-prompted scheme for a supply of letterpress to subserve a series of illustrations by a well-known rival of Cruikshank in black and white *genre*. The offer was too tempting for Dickens to refuse, and *Pickwick* was begun.

Having early got rid of the sporting element, Dickens found himself at once. The subject exactly suited his knowledge, his skill in arranging incidents—nay, his very limitations too. No modern book is so incalculable. We



From a Photograph by Fradelle and Young.

Charles Dickens

commence laughing heartily at Pickwick and his troupe. The laugh becomes kindlier. We are led on through a tangle of adventure, never dreaming what is before us. The landscape changes: Pickwick becomes the symbol of kind-heartedness, simplicity, and innocent levity. Suddenly in the Fleet Prison a deeper note is struck. The medley of human relationships, the loneliness, the mystery and sadness of human destinies are fathomed. The tragedy of human life is revealed to us amid its most farcical elements. The droll and laughable figure of the hero is transfigured by the kindness of human sympathy into a beneficent and bespectacled angel in shorts and gaiters. By defying accepted rules, Dickens had transcended the limited sphere hitherto allotted to his art; he had produced a book to be enshrined henceforth in the inmost heart of all sorts and conditions of his countrymen, and had definitely enlarged the boundaries of English humour and English fiction.

While the public were just rejoicing in the first sprightly runnings of the "new humour," the humorist set to work desperately on the grim scenes of *Oliver Twist*, the story of a parish orphan, the nucleus of which had already seen the light in his *Sketches*. The early scenes are of a harrowing reality, despite the germ of forced pathos which the observant reader may detect in the pitiful parting between Oliver and little Dick; but what will strike every reader at once in this book is the directness and power of the English style, so nervous and unadorned; from its unmistakable cleanness and vigour Dickens was to travel far as time went on. But the full effect of the old simplicity is felt in such masterpieces of description as the drive of Oliver and Sikes to Chertsey, the condemned cell ecstasy of Fagin, or the unforgettable first encounter between Oliver and the Artful Dodger.

Before November, 1837, had ended, Charles Dickens entered on an engagement to write a successor to *Pickwick* on similar lines of publication. *Oliver Twist* was then in mid-career; a *Life of Grimaldi* and *Barnaby Rudge* were already covenanted for. Dickens forged ahead with the new tale of *Nicholas Nickleby* and was justified by the results, for its sale far surpassed even that of *Pickwick*. As a conception it is one of his weakest. An unmistakably eighteenth-century character pervades it. Some of the vignettes are among the most

piquant and besetting ever written. Large parts of it are totally unobserved conventional melodrama; but the Portsmouth Theatre and Dotheboys Hall and Mrs. Nickleby (based to some extent, it is thought, upon Miss Bates in *Emma*, but also upon the author's mamma) will live for ever as Dickens conceived them in the pages of *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Having got rid of *Nicholas Nickleby* and resigned his editorship of *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which *Oliver Twist* originally appeared, Dickens conceived the idea of a weekly periodical to be issued as *Master Humphrey's Clock*, to comprise short stories, essays and miscellaneous papers, after the model of Addison's *Spectator*. To make the weekly numbers "go," he introduced Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller and his father in friendly intercourse. But the public requisitioned "a story," and in No. 4 he had to brace himself up to give them one. Thus was commenced *The Old Curiosity Shop*, which was continued with slight interruptions, and followed by *Barnaby Rudge*. For the first time we find Dickens obsessed by a highly complicated plot. The tonality achieved in *The Old Curiosity Shop* surpassed anything he had attempted in this difficult vein, while the rich humour of Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness, and the vivid portraiture of the wandering Bohemians, attain to the very highest level of Dickensian drollery; but in the lamentable tale of Little Nell (though Landor and Jeffrey thought the character-drawing of this infant comparable with that of Cordelia) it is generally admitted that he committed an indecent assault upon the emotions by exhibiting a veritable monster of piety and long-suffering in a child of tender years. In *Barnaby Rudge* he was manifestly affected by the influence of Scott, whose achievements he always regarded with a touching veneration. The plot, again, is of the utmost complexity, and Edgar Allan Poe (who predicted the conclusion) must be one of the few persons who have ever really mastered it. But few of Dickens's books are written in a more admirable style.

Master Humphrey's Clock concluded, Dickens started in 1842 on his first visit to America—an episode hitherto without parallel in our literary history, for he was received everywhere with popular acclamation as the representative of a grand triumph of the English language and imagination, without regard to distinctions of nationality.

He offended the American public grievously by a few words of frank description and a few quotations of the advertisement columns of American papers illustrating the essential barbarity of the old slave system (*American Notes*). Dickens was soon pining for home—no English writer is more essentially and insularly English in inspiration and aspiration than he is. He still brooded over the perverseness of America on the copyright question, and in his next book he took the opportunity of uttering a few of his sharper impressions about the ludicrous sides of American democracy, the result being that "all Yankee-doodle-dom blazed up like one universal soda bottle," as Carlyle expressed it. *Martin Chuzzlewit* is important as closing his great character period. His *sève originale*, as the French would say, was by this time to a considerable extent exhausted, and he had to depend more upon artistic elaboration, upon satires, upon *tours de force* of description, upon romantic and ingenious contrivances. But all these resources combined proved unequal to his powers as an original observer of popular types, until he reinforced himself by autobiographic reminiscence, as in *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*, the two great books remaining to his later career.

After these two masterpieces and the three wonderful books with which he made his *début*, we are inclined to rank *Chuzzlewit*. Nothing in Dickens is more admirably seen and presented than Todgers's, a bit of London particular cut out with a knife; Mr. Pecksniff and Mrs. Gamp, it is needless to say, have passed into the national language and national life. The coach journey, the windy autumn night, the stealthy trail of Jonas, the undertone of tragedy in the Charity and Mercy and Chuffy episodes, suggest a blending of imaginative vision and physical penetration hardly seen elsewhere.

Two things are specially notable about this novel—the exceptional care taken over it (as shown by the interlineations in the MS.) and the caprice or nonchalance of the purchasing public, its sales being far lower than those of any of its monthly predecessors. At the close of 1843, to pay outstanding debts of his now lavish housekeeping, he wrote that pioneer of Christmas numbers, that national benefit as Thackeray called it, *A Christmas Carol*. It failed to realise his pecuniary anticipations, and Dickens resolved upon a drastic policy of retrenchment and reform. He would save

expense by living abroad and would punish his publishers by withdrawing his custom from them, at least for a time. Like everything else upon which he ever determined, this resolution was carried out with the greatest possible precision and dispatch.

In June, 1844, he set out for Marseilles with his now rapidly increasing family (the journey cost him £200). In a villa in the outskirts of Genoa he wrote *The Chimes*, which, during a brief excursion to London before Christmas, he read to a select circle of friends (the germ of his subsequent lecture-audiences), including Forster, Carlyle, Stanfield, Dyce, Maclise, and Jerrold. Next year he enjoyed his favourite diversion of private theatricals; and in January, 1846, he experimented briefly, and for once unsuccessfully, as the editor of a London morning paper—*The Daily News*.

By early spring he was back at Lausanne, writing his customary vivid letters to his friends, craving as usual for London streets, commencing *Dombey & Son*, and walking his fourteen miles daily. The success of *Dombey & Son* completely rehabilitated the master's finances, enabled him to return to England, send his son to Eton, and to begin to save money. Artistically it is less satisfactory; it contains some of Dickens's prime curios, such as Cuttle, Bunsby, Toots, Blimber, Pipchin, Mrs. MacStinger, and Toby Biler; it contains also that masterpiece of sentimentality which trembles upon the borderland of the sublime and the ridiculous, the death of Paul Dombey ("that sweet Paul," as Jeffrey, the "critic laureate," called him), and some grievous and unquestionable blemishes. As a narrative, moreover, it tails off into a highly complicated and exacting plot. It was followed by a long rest at Broadstairs, before Dickens returned to the native home of his genius, and early in 1849 "began to prepare for" *David Copperfield*.

"Of all my books," Dickens wrote, "I like this the best; like many fond parents I have my favourite child, and his name is David Copperfield." In some respects it stands to Dickens in something of the same relation that the contemporary *Pendennis* stands to Thackeray. As in that book, too, the earlier portions are the best. They gained in intensity by the autobiographical form into which they are thrown; as Thackeray observed, there was no writing against such power. The tragedy

of Emily and the character of Rosa Dartle are profoundly unsatisfactory, stagey, and unreal; Agnes, again, is far less convincing as a consolation than Dickens would have us believe; but these are more than compensated by the wonderful realisation of early boyhood in the book, by the picture of Mr. Creakle's school, the Peggottys, the inimitable Mr. Micawber, Betsey Trotwood, and that monument of selfish misery, Mrs. Gummidge.

At the end of March, 1850, commenced the new twopenny weekly called *Household Words*, which Dickens planned to form a direct means of communication between himself and his readers, and as a means of collecting around him and encouraging the talents of the younger generation. No one was better qualified than he for this work, whether we consider his complete freedom from literary jealousy or his magical gift of inspiring young authors.

Following the somewhat dreary and incoherent *Bleak House* of 1852, *Hard Times* (1854)—an anti-Manchester School tract, which Ruskin regarded as Dickens's best work—was the first long story written for *Household Words*. About this time Dickens made his final home at Gad's Hill, near Rochester, and put the finishing touch to another long novel published upon the old plan and named *Little Dorrit*. In spite of the exquisite comedy of the master of the Marshalsea and the final tragedy of the central figure, *Little Dorrit* is sadly deficient in the old vitality, the humour is often a mock reality, and the repetition of comic catch-words and overstrung similes and metaphors is such as to affect the reader with nervous irritation. The plot and characters ruin each other in this amorphous production. The *Tale of Two Cities*, commenced in *All the Year Round* (the successor of *Household Words*) in 1859, is a great improvement: the main characters are powerful, the story genuinely tragic, and the atmosphere lurid; but the enormous labour everywhere expended upon the construction of stylistic ornament is only too apparent. The *Tale* was followed by two finer efforts at atmospheric delineation, the best things he ever did of this kind: the first is *Great Expectations*, over which there broods the mournful impression of the foggy marshes of the Lower Thames; the second is *Our Mutual Friend*, in which the ooze and mud and slime of Rotherhithe, its boatmen and loafers, is made to pervade the whole book with cumulative effect. The general

effect produced by the stories is, however, very different. In the first case, the foreground was supplied by autobiographical material of the most vivid interest, and the lucidity of the creative impulse impelled him to write upon this occasion with his old simplicity, though with an added power. Nothing, therefore, in the whole range of Dickens surpasses the early chapters of *Great Expectations* in perfection of technique or in mastery of all the resources of the novelist's art.

In November, 1867, he set out on a second expedition to America, leaving all the writing that he was ever to complete behind him. He was to make a round sum of money, enough to free him from all embarrassments, by a long series of exhausting readings, commencing at the Tremont Temple, Boston, on December 2nd. The strain of Dickens's ordinary life was so tense and so continuous that it is, perhaps, rash to assume that he broke down eventually under this particular stress; for other reasons, however, his persistence in these readings, subsequent to his return, was strongly deprecated by his literary friends, led by the arbitrary and relentless Forster. It is a strong testimony to Dickens's self-restraint, even in his most capricious and despotic moments, that he never broke the cord of obligation which bound him to his literary mentor, though sparring matches between them were latterly of frequent occurrence. His farewell reading was given on March 15th, 1870, at St. James's Hall. He then vanished from "those garish lights," as he called them, "for evermore." Of the three brief months that remained to him, his last book, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, was the chief occupation. It hardly promised to become a masterpiece as did Thackeray's *Denis Duval*, but contained much characteristic later work, and fine descriptive technique, grouped round a scene of which Dickens had an unrivalled sympathetic knowledge (Cloisterham is of course Rochester).

In March and April Charles Dickens mixed in the highest society, dined with the Prince at Lord Houghton's, and was twice at court, once at a long-deferred private interview with the Queen, who begged him on his persistent refusal of any other distinction to accept the nominal distinction of a Privy Councillor. He returned to his ordinary methodical routine at Gad's Hill on May 30th. On Thursday, June 8th, after a long spell of writing in the

châlet where he habitually wrote, he collapsed suddenly at dinner. His sister-in-law (Georgie Hogarth) remarked an appalling expression on his countenance. "Come and lie down," she entreated. "Yes, on the ground," he said very distinctly. These were the last words he spoke; and he slid from her arm and fell upon the floor. He died at 6.10 a.m. on June 9th, 1870. He was buried privately in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, in the early

morning of June 14th. One of the most touching memorials was the drawing by Luke Fildes in *The Graphic* of "The Empty Chair: Gad's Hill, Ninth of June, 1870." In his will he enjoined his friends to erect no monument in his honour, and directed his name and dates only to be inscribed in plain English letters on his tomb, adding this proud provision, "I rest my claim to the remembrance of my country on my published works."

"I HAVE heard Dickens described by those who knew him," says Yates, "as aggressive, imperious, and intolerant, and I can comprehend the accusation; but to me his temper was always of the sweetest and kindest. He would, I doubt not, have been easily bored, and would not have scrupled to show it, but he never ran the risk. He was imperious in the sense that his life was conducted on the *sic volo sic jubeo* principle, and that everything gave way before him. The society in which he mixed, the hours which he kept, the opinions which he held, his likes and dislikes, his ideas of what should or should not be, were all settled by himself, not merely for himself, but for all those brought into connection with him, and it was never imagined they could be called in question. Yet he was never regarded as a tyrant; he had immense power of will, absolute mesmeric force, as he proved beneficially more than once, and that he should lead and govern seemed perfectly natural to us." In order to get through his day's work he had of course to be extremely punctilious in the matter of routine. Everything with him went as by clockwork, his movements, his absences from home, and the times of his return were all fixed beforehand, and it was seldom that he failed to adhere to what he had fixed. He could not live in a room or a house until he had put every piece of furniture into its proper place. The least deviation from the strictest order irritated him beyond endurance. Wherever he went, and he was constantly moving his abode, he carried the same undeviating routine. Rising early, looking about him, observing and thinking for an hour or more before breakfast. Completing three or four MS. pages between breakfast and luncheon at a desk, the arrangement of which was a solemn ritual in itself. Walking vigorously in the afternoon. His wonderful letters were written and his after-dinner orations (in which he had only one competitor, Disraeli) composed one can hardly say when. But as Hazlitt said of himself, the more he did the more he found time to do. As a magazine editor we know he was most painstaking, and the only duty he would ever seem to have performed in the least perfunctorily was his brief editorship of *The Daily News* at its foundation in January, 1846. Slovenliness, half-done work, and shoddiness of all kinds were his particular abhorrence.

His antipathy was a half-hearted being—a man who did not care. Commander-in-chief in small things as well as great, inspector-general of his household, observing, controlling, encouraging, a healing influence in sickness, a resource in every emergency, Dickens was a sort of terrestrial providence for all who came under his immediate sway. His versatility was unique. He was extraordinarily quick and intelligent and adaptive at everything he took up. In work or in play, in mirth or seriousness alike, he stood for a score of men. Wherever he went he was easily first. At society dinner-parties the contest always was to be placed near Charles Dickens. What magic there was to many still living in those three syllables! Pointed out with pride at the Athenæum—"Mr. Dickens, sir, one of our members"; sought after at court; viewed with respect mingled with wholesome awe by the greatest statesmen of his time, no one could patronise—no one dared to dream of patronising—Charles Dickens. "Statesmen, men of science, philanthropists, the acknowledged benefactors of their race might pass away," so wrote *The Times*, "and yet not leave the void which will be caused by the death of Dickens." It was perfectly true in London, in the world of letters, in English society, wherever English is understood—Charles Dickens, at his death, left a blank impossible to fill up.

Dickens would never perhaps have been conspicuous in argument, for certain disqualifying prejudices were rooted in his inmost nature, and he hated parliamentary and other debate (which he described as circumlocution) with the sincerity of your genuine autocrat. He was a kind of liberal and a kind of unitarian, though he never got quite emancipated from the pietistic subconsciousness of middle-class England of the 1815-35 period. But all dreaming was put aside in the presence of affairs. "Subtract his genius," says Gissing with a fine insight, "and we have a most capable, upright, vigorous man of business—the very ideal (so much better than all but a few actual examples) of commercial England. . . . To minds of a certain type there appears to be the utmost satisfaction in pointing out that Shakespeare made money and built 'the trimmest house in Stratford town'; but who can seriously suggest that even *mutatis mutandis* Shakespeare's business aptitudes and success were comparable with those of Dickens? The author of *Hamlet* indubitably had common sense, but, most happily, business as it is understood among us now-a-days had not been dreamt of in Elizabethan England, and one may safely assert that Shakespeare was no distinguished merchant even in the sense of that day. Dickens might easily have become a great capitalist."

CHAPTER III

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

"Thackeray, observateur surtout, n'a pas cette haute morale constructive des Tolstoi et des George Eliot. Il ne tire pas la conclusion de ses prémisses. 'Chacun est égoïste,' dit-il, 'chacun est malheureux. Vanité des vanités.' Mais il ne va pas jusqu'à dire. 'Le désir individuel est l'ennemi du bonheur : renonçons au désir.' Il n'a pas eu la vision d'un monde où les hommes chercheront ensemble le bonheur de tous. Il ne s'est pas dit que l'homme qui augmente par l'altruisme la surface sensitive de son âme est incapable de désespoir ou même de déception. Il n'a rien expliqué : il s'est borné à constater ; et là, peut-être, est la valeur et la vérité de son œuvre."—M. DUCLAUX.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, son of Richmond Thackeray, a magistrate in Bengal, of a regular "nabob" family, was named after his grandfather, W. Makepeace Thackeray, an East Indian factor, who made a considerable fortune as an elephant-dealer, and was connected with the Rennells, the Moores, the Richmond Webbs, and other well-known families. The future novelist was born at Calcutta on July 18th, 1811, sent to England at six, and five years later entered at Charterhouse—the Slaughterhouse and Grey Friars of his many allusions. There was none of the barbarous simplicity of the typical British schoolboy about the youthful Thackeray ; already he showed a precocious talent for lampoon and caricature. His cleverness and social talents were not long under a bushel at Trinity College, Cambridge. He developed a strong taste for the reading and discussion of English literature, and formed lifelong friendships with FitzGerald, Spalding, Brookfield, Monckton-Milnes, and Tennyson. It was always "old Alfred," "old Brooks," "old Fitz," and "old Thack" between them. A parody of the subject of Tennyson's prize poem on "Timbuctoo" formed a characteristic feature of Thackeray's little undergraduate leaflet, *The Snob* (1829), which ran for eleven numbers, and contains the germs of many pleasantries which he was later on to develop. He was already in politics what he remained to the end—a very loose-jointed Liberal, much puzzled by the revolutionary ideas of Shelley, whose poetry he idolised. He left Cambridge without a degree, but with many friends and

with an intimate knowledge both of the text and congenial philosophy of Horatius Flaccus. Early recollections of East Indian types and school and college days were worked up again and again in *Pendennis*, *The Newcomes*, and *Philip*. More educational were his early sojourns abroad. By 1829 he had already made a truant jaunt to Paris. In 1830 he made a longer stay at Weimar, saw Goethe, *vidi tantum*, and collected materials for some of his freshest pages. He was now master of some £20,000, inherited from his father, with expensive habits, considerable debts, and no definite vocation in life—for he had very soon relinquished the law as soulless. At twenty-two he was elected to the Garrick Club, and was henceforth a conspicuous clubman, both in character and habit. Between gambling and speculation he lost money rapidly during 1833, and was brought to realise that he would have to work for his bread. Some such stimulus was necessary in the case of a man so indolent and dilettante by temperament. But the artist was ingrained in Thackeray, and the spur of necessity made a great writer of him. At first, however, he thought that he could draw better than he could do anything else—a somewhat extraordinary delusion. He went to Paris to learn the art, with some idea of going on to Rome—much as Clive Newcome did with "J. J." Abraham Hayward speaks of his copying noted pictures in the Louvre. In 1836 he submitted sketches to Dickens as a would-be illustrator of *Pickwick*. He contributed to *Galvani's Messenger* and was Paris correspon-

dent to a London paper, *The Constitutional*, in which he himself and his family had invested a considerable amount of money. Some of these contributions survive in *The Paris Sketch Book* (1840), and the dregs of them in *The New Sketch Book* (1906), in which Thackeray showed himself a singularly immature critic, almost ignoring Dumas and Balzac for their want of gentility, and lauding to the skies Charles de Bernard. In 1836 also he married, at the Embassy at Paris, his wife, who had a charming voice, suggesting some of the traits of Emmy in *Vanity Fair*. Their married happiness was cruelly severed in 1840 by an illness which proved to be due to a lesion of the brain.

From the failure of *The Constitutional* in July, 1837, Thackeray had to drive his quill with an increased rapidity. He was already, as Jeames Yellowplush, one of the Fraserians, and scribbling energetically now as Jeames, now as FitzBoodle, or again as Michael Angelo Titmarsh (a recollection of the pseudonyms of the old *London Magazine*), for *Fraser's*, as well as for *Colburn's*, *Bentley's*, and the like. He was joining new clubs and rapidly becoming a well-known figure; but, though he could suit the magazines, he could not as yet hit the public. *Blackwood* refused his first story of distinct promise, *The History of Samuel Titmarsh and the Great Hoggarty Diamond*; it eventually appeared in *Fraser*, but was voted dull and extinguished. Thackeray joined Mr. Punch's table at No. 137 (the number that contained Hood's great poem), succeeding to the place at the mahogany and at first to some of Jerrold's dislike of that egregious snob Albert, known as "Lord Smith." The delightful *Yellowplush Papers* preceded *The Snobs of England* in the pages of *Punch*, where also appeared the Prize Novels and many of "W. M. T.'s" priceless ballads. It seems an ironic dispensation that he should have strayed from this good fellowship, as Charles Keene eventually did, on a question of foreign policy. He deemed the hunch-back too savage in his dealings with Napoleon III.

In the pages of the *Charivari* Thackeray's old love of travesty had taken the form of burlesquing the language of flunkeydom, and ridiculing the perverted sensibility of Bulwer-Lytton, Eugène Sue, and Harrison Ainsworth. The idea that he represented, namely, that a notorious criminal was a hideous and repulsive

rather than a picturesque object, and should be depicted accordingly, was that held by the university group with which he still kept up connection. With this motive he had previously produced *Catherine*, the detailed story of an early Georgian husband-murderer, extenuating little, but greatly impairing the necessary irony of such a relation by the infusion of the didactic and the personal; while in 1844 came the well-nigh perfect picaresque of *Barry Lyndon*. Here he was dominated by good literary influence, Fielding (*Jonathan Wild*) Smollett (*Count Fathom*) and Casanova, so that he almost forgot to preach.

In August, 1844, Thackeray obtained a free pass on a P. & O. steamer to the Near East, and the result was that sparkling cluster of *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo*—the last—but for the Christmas stories—of the Titmarsh books. Thackeray's style had now reached maturity; he knew the material that suited him, and had enough of it for his needs, scattered up and down under journalistic pen-names. The transition from the twilight celebrity of Titmarsh, Jeames, etc., to "the author of *Vanity Fair*" was a comparatively simple affair. The first monthly part of *Vanity Fair* was issued on January 1st, 1847, and was sewn in a canary wrapper to distinguish it from the verdant-green of *Pickwick* and its successors. Curiosity about Thackeray had been ripening ever since the *Snob Papers*, and the final touch of success was added in January, 1848, when Hayward, in *The Edinburgh*, complimented the work as one written by a gentleman for gentlemen. Here was an Open Sesame to ears polite and to the pockets of circumambient gentility!

Fresh from the triumph of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray plunged into another long novel in monthly parts with an access of inspiration to which we owe those inimitable chapters describing Major Pendennis and his ungrateful pilgrimage to Clavering to quench the ardent love of his nephew Arthur for the tragedy queen of the Chatteris (Exeter) Theatre Royal. The book has its *longueurs*, but many of the episodes are perfect. Where are to be found in novel or memoir characters better observed than the Major and his man Morgan, Blanche Amory, Harry Foker? It is true that in *Pendennis*, as in *Vanity Fair*, there is not merely an absence of the heroic mould, but scarcely a character that can claim our profound respect.



From the Painting by Samuel Laurence.

William Makepeace Thackeray

Dobbin, Bowes, and Warrington are insufficient to refute the view that Thackeray is inclined to take a rather paltry idea of life.

As a lecturer on *The English Humourists* and *The Four Georges*, Thackeray had the previous example of Carlyle in his mind. His discourses were given at Willis's Rooms; the prices were high, and the company select. Jerrold inquired, in his bitter way: “First rate, Thack, my boy; but where's the piano?” The lecturer unwound a thin skein of silk with the delicacy of a modern French *conférencier*. The style was admirably suited to his hearers; the substance is less admirable. Swift, Steele, Goldsmith, Sterne, even Addison—all are depicted as objects deserving of compassion; poor fellows enslaved by their convivial vices, the martyrs of their temperaments. Can it be, one asks, that in the exaggeration of their peccadilloes, as in those of some of the quasi-heroes of his novels, Thackeray, after the manner of Boswell or Carlyle, finds a kind of relief in attributing some of his own foibles to those of his great predecessors in humorous satire?

A sparkling fancy, combined with the sensitive, nervous irritability which is of the essence of his temperament, enabled Thackeray to produce his most characteristic work, and this reaches its highest in the Waterloo and Steyne chapters in *Vanity Fair* and the first half of *Pendennis*. But a touch so exquisite proved almost necessarily volatile and evanescent. In its place the author was prone to fall into a vein of free and easy, but at times almost maudlin sentimentality and moralising. Fortunately, his keen appreciation of the artistic side of our literature and history often came to his rescue, and never more conspicuously than in *Esmond*, published in three volumes (not in parts) just as Thackeray was about to sail for America (on a dollar-hunting expedition as lecturer) in 1852. This was the most carefully constructed of his books, and as a work of art, though less distinctively characteristic, it is undoubtedly the finest. His favourite eighteenth-century writers whose fine passages he had quoted with such discrimination in his lectures, haunted his memory with their classic tones, and Thackeray, who could imitate as well as he could burlesque, was so occupied with his phrasing, his atmosphere, and his historic *milieu*, that he has no time to be didactic and personal. He gets completely away from himself and his self-imposed task of squaring the social circle.

Scene after scene in the romance lingers in the memory, and assists the imagination of the reader in bodying forth the form and pressure, the colour and the accent, of a period prolific in great names and great actions. In artistic unity and completeness nothing that English fiction had yet produced could approach the first twenty-two chapters of this pseudo-historical autobiography.

After finishing *Esmond* Thackeray made the first of two visits across the Atlantic. In America he was lionised and liked mainly—except in Boston, where they persisted in taking him for a snob—and he came back over £2,000 to the good, and dashed into a new family biography, *The Newcomes*—a great novel, containing many of his finest characters, much familiar chat in his most agreeable manner, but more unequal even than *Pendennis*.

It was followed, also in monthly parts, by *The Virginians* (November, 1857—October, 1859) which supplies links between Esmond's daughter, Rachel Warrington, and the Warrington in *Pendennis*. There are similar links between nearly all Thackeray's novels, illustrating the constant amusement he took in consolidating the definite picture of the world of snobs which he had formed in his imagination. It also formed a pleasing exercise for his literary ingenuity, which was great. The youthful heroes are well drawn: Thackeray is as successful with his adolescents as Dickens is with his children. Some of the chapters in *The Virginians* could hardly be bettered—such, for instance, as that in which young Warrington, from the shores of the Potomac, revisits the home of his fathers, or that in which Beatrix, Baroness of Bernstein, first encounters Esmond's grandson; but the book is heavily padded; even in *Esmond* one had learnt only too much of Dick Steele's capacities as a bore; the celebrities at Tunbridge Wells resemble those stuffed lions in which a handle is turned and the animals roar.

But the time was now ripe for “the great Thackeray,” as he had become, to be financially “promoted.” The old monthlies, with the exception of *Blackwood*, were in a state of collapse. There was a great future, said the literary prophets, for shilling magazines, and the prophets were right. *Household Words* had been successfully loaded with Dickens; the new venture was auspiciously charged with Thackeray, and the detonation was immense,

far surpassing that of *Macmillan's*, started a month or two beforehand. No. 1 of *The Cornhill* appeared with the New Year in 1860, and Thackeray went off, as happy as a boy, to spend a brief holiday in Paris. In No. 6 he was still celebrating fresh conquests—great victories—unparalleled sales! His own contribution of *Lovel the Widower* was followed by *The Adventures of Philip on his Way through the World* (1861-2), in which the tender character of the "Little Sister" is redeemed from the far-off *Shabby Genteel Story* to delight us, though she is unable to convert *Philip* into a good book. But *The Cornhill* did one great service to Thackeray as an artist—it gave him a status as a fugitive essayist. Fielding, Prior, and Arbuthnot by turns, Thackeray concludes in the rôle of his own well-loved Addison, with the "dear delightful" *Round-about Papers*, full of, not "divine," but most human "chit-chat." With the spoils of *Corn-*

hill he built himself a fine mansion (a vast credit to literature, Johnson would have said) in Palace Green, Kensington. There he gave parties, from the *éclat* of which he frequently crept away to his clubs: he was a familiar figure of the Athenæum and Reform, as well as of the "dear little Garrick"; and there he died very suddenly on Christmas Eve, 1863, of an effusion of blood into the brain. He was discovered dead by the servant who took him his chocolate in the morning. The novelist was buried at Kensal Green on December 30th, all the best-known authors of the day standing by his graveside, and was mourned by thousands who knew him only through his creations. He was only fifty-two when he took the last journey, of which he had written to Mrs. Procter: "Others may walk down to the pier with us, but we must make the voyage alone." Death, he said, grieved him only in the case of the very young or very happy, and he was neither.

Among the early associates and close college friends of Thackeray's circle was that shyest of all our literary celebrities, Edward Fitzgerald. The translator of Omar Khayyám was born at Bredfield House in Suffolk on March 31st, 1809. His father, John Purcell, on the death of his wife's father in 1818, took the name and arms of Fitzgerald. In 1821 Edward went to school at Bury St. Edmunds, proceeding to Trinity College, Cambridge, and taking his degree in 1830. By this time he had shown his genius for friendship. Among his schoolfellows were James Spedding and W. B. Donne, and at college he became closely intimate not only with Thackeray, but also with Thompson, afterwards Master of Trinity, and John Allen, afterwards Archdeacon of Salop. About 1835 Tennyson was added to the list of his intimates. Fitzgerald's parents were at one time very wealthy, and though they had serious reverses, their son was always in easy circumstances. By deliberate choice he settled down to a rustic life, most of which was spent in his native county of Suffolk. He moved from place to place in the same neighbourhood, his last home being Little Grange, near Woodbridge, which he built for himself. Among his friends of the neighbourhood were the Rev. George Crabbe (Vicar of Bredfield, and son of the poet), Archdeacon Groome, and Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet of Woodbridge. Fitzgerald's first publication was a short memoir of Barton prefixed to a collection of his letters and poems, which was made after the poet's death in 1849. Life went on very quietly. Fitzgerald occupied himself with literature and music. He cultivated his flowers, and spent much of the summers in his yacht cruising round the neighbouring coast. Though unconventional, he was not quite a recluse. His friends visited him occasionally, and sometimes he paid a reluctant visit to London. In 1856 he married Barton's daughter, Lucy, but a separation soon followed. This was perhaps the chief trial of Fitzgerald's life. But he found fresh interests chiefly under the guidance of his friends, Professor and Mrs. Cowell. His books, *Euphranor: a Dialogue of Youth*, published anonymously in 1851, and *Polonius: a Collection of Wise Saws and Modern Instances*, attracted very little attention, but Cowell introduced him to Spanish and to Persian with results that were to be memorable. He published a translation of six of Calderon's dramas with his name attached in 1853. They were very severely reviewed by John Chorley in *The Athenæum*, and the sensitive author withdrew the book. Fitzgerald's purpose was to produce on the reader the impression conveyed by the original to those who understood the language, and this led him to take large liberties. His knowledge of Spanish was hardly that of a scholar. Very much more important was his translation of the "quatrains" of Omar Khayyám, the astronomer poet of Persia, whose writings he first saw in 1856 in a manuscript belonging to the Bodleian Library. Fitzgerald was in full sympathy with Omar's mood, and though he used to the full his right to alter and to substitute, the translation was a living poem. As Mr. Swinburne said, "His daring genius gave Omar Khayyám a place for ever among the greatest English poets." The translation lay for two years in the hands of a magazine editor, and when published separately in 1859 it made no mark. In 1860, Rossetti discovered it in the ignominious penny box on the bookstalls. Swinburne, Lord Houghton, and others proclaimed the treasure, but it was not till 1868 that the second and revised edition was published. Indeed, the poem did not come to its own till Fitzgerald was dead. It was in 1885 that Tennyson dedicated his *Tiresias* to Fitzgerald's memory. Then came the extraordinary vogue which has influenced contemporary thought in an almost unexampled way. Perhaps no poem of the last forty-five

years is so well known as "Omar"—indeed, a cult has grown round it. This is due not merely to the magic and the melody of the verses, but to their temper, which harmonised with that prevailing in the closing years of the nineteenth century. FitzGerald was little affected by what was passing. He translated the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus, which was published in 1876, and the *Edipus Tyrannus* and the *Edipus Coloneus* of Sophocles. When in 1889 FitzGerald's executor, Dr. Aldis Wright, published his Letters and literary remains in three volumes, it was at once recognised that FitzGerald was among the very greatest of English letter writers. Pensive, playful, affectionate, written out of a large leisure and a tender sympathy, these letters are among the treasures of the language. Perhaps the very best are those addressed to Fanny Kemble, which were published in 1895. It is upon his letters and his "Omar" that FitzGerald's fame will rest. He was a very acute critic, favouring particularly Shakespeare, Sophocles, Seigné, Charles Lamb, and George Crabbe. He esteemed highly the critical judgment of J. R. Lowell. Cervantes and Scott were for him the masters of fiction, but he appreciated Dickens and Thackeray. FitzGerald was a warm admirer of the early work of Tennyson, but he considered that after his first period the poet produced little of permanent worth. He had small patience with Browning, and none with Mrs. Browning, and it is evident that he did not return the admiration so freely accorded him by Rossetti. On June 14th, 1883, FitzGerald, whose life had been darkening into a deeper melancholy, died suddenly while on a visit to his friend Crabbe at Merton Rectory, Suffolk.

Another contemporary recluse of genius, as unclassifiable as FitzGerald, was George Borrow (1803—1881). Like Fitz himself, too, a dweller in East Anglia, a revolté, a costive, sullen, and secretive artist, who in an age of ultra-refinement and intellectual progress reverted to Defoe and sought, like the great pioneers of the *novela picaresca* in Spain, to depict man in a state of nature and at war with his species, to a generation of villa-residents and town-dwellers, who take their town about with them wheresoever they go, Borrow has come to represent the apostle of road-faring adventure in a more or less prehistoric England. After an adolescence as little promising of literary eminence as that of Richard Jefferies, Borrow, whose education had been scrappy, and whose influence was restricted to what the second son of a half-pay officer would ordinarily exercise, managed upon the strength of his out-of-the-way linguistic attainments to obtain a post as colporteur and agent of the Bible Society, first in Russia and then in Spain. While in Spain, being then in the prime of manhood (33—37), Borrow, in the very act of diarising for the Society's benefit, was collecting the material for a strange kind of Ishmaelite romance, *The Bible in Spain* (1842). Its gypsified outlook on life gained piquancy from the fact that it was written by a Protestant missionary, and was admitted by the sanctimonious to all the privileges of a Sunday book. The world looked to Borrow for another book of autobiography and romantic travel combined. The result was *Lavengro* (1851), followed by its sequel *The Romany Rye*, in which after from eight to fourteen years' hard work Borrow staked out his claim to have been an outlaw as much at home as abroad, and to have remained a complete sceptic *vis à vis* of England's mission as arch-priest of modern refinement and commercial civilisation. Once more he wrote in the hard unsentimental prose of the early Spanish narrators. The critics were nonplussed and railed at what they deemed obsolete prejudice. Borrow drew back into his shell, and died an old man of seventy-seven in his lonely summer-house at Oulton, unconscious of the legendary fame that was in store for him in the twentieth century. Borrow's literary cargo was of a decidedly anomalous kind; instinctively he found a craft as exceptional upon which to freight it. Many deemed the vessel crazy and predicted that she would soon become derelict. The vision of the skipper, said they, was distorted, his lines all crooked and his chart antediluvian. But George Borrow stuck brazenly to his colours, with the result that out of the age of Peel and Gladstone, from materials which he was pleased to call autobiographical, he begot a romance that might compete at some points with *Robinson Crusoe* or *Robin Hood*. In an age of exuberant and militant Liberalism he remained a blatant Tory, in an age of toleration he remained intolerant; when all men with one accord began to make concessions, he stuck like adamant to his prejudices, and when they began to talk æsthetics, he nailed to his mainmast the national flag of Philistia. Such a man was obviously a great original. Fragmentary and unequal though they are, his works are beginning to strike deep roots in our English soil, yet the tradition of the man and of his insurgent personality is more likely than not to eclipse the fame of his books, and the day is not distant when clever writers who have never opened *The Bible in Spain* will seek to conjure with the name of George Borrow.

A contemporary, rather eccentric writer, and also, as it happens, like FitzGerald, a great friend, entertainer and upholder of Thackeray, was Dr. John Brown (1810—1882), an Edinburgh worthy and great-grandson of John Brown of Haddington, author of *The Self-Interpreting Bible*. Quiet, internal humour, with the narrow, pertinacious observation of a physician—these are salient traits of the essayist who has gained the permanent small niche inscribed to the author of *Rab and his Friends*, *Minchmoor*, *Thackeray's Death*, and *Marjorie Fleming*, all included in *Horæ Subsecivæ* (3 vols. 1882), a "light but imperishable literature," whose kindly author left North Britain in May, 1882, for—may we not hope, with Swinburne?—

"Some happier isle in the Elysian sea,
Where Rab may lick the hand of Marjorie."

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE ELIOT

"There is much talk to-day about things being open to women, but George Eliot showed that there is nothing that is closed."—HENRY JAMES.

GEORGE ELIOT, whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, was born at South Farm, Arbury Park, Warwickshire, where her father was land agent to the Newdigate family, on November 22nd, 1819. Both the father, Robert, and his father, George Evans, had been carpenters and builders, Mary Ann's father being the prototype of an Adam Bede developing into a Caleb Garth. Six months after her birth, the family moved to Griff House, on the high-road between Nuneaton and Coventry, an old red-brick farm covered with ivy and backing on to a tangled garden, like that appropriated to Mrs. Poyser. The detailed history of the children in *The Mill on the Floss* may be read with but slight modification, as that of Mary Ann Evans and her brother Isaac. She was always of a passionate disposition, always seeking a masculine object to idealise—first her brother, then her father, then an artist lover. In the housekeeper's room at Arbury, in her father's gig as he drove through the Warwickshire lanes, she gathered those exact impressions of country talk and parlour conversation as carried on in the simple, slow-moving, old-fashioned midland provinces of eighty years ago. Her mother died, and her elder sister got married when she was but sixteen, leaving Mary Ann to the companionship of her father and brother (the Tom of *The Mill on the Floss*). In 1841 the small household settled on the outskirts of Coventry, and there, in November, began the intimacy with the Brays which first definitely opened to her a literary horizon. Hitherto her favourite books had been the *Imitation of Christ*, *Rasselas*, and *The Lives of the Poets*, Whiston's *Josephus*, Bunyan and Young. She now began to devour such books as Charles Bray's *Philosophy of Necessity*, and

his friend Charles Hennell's *Inquiry into the Origin of Christianity*. The result was a period of a somewhat crude scepticism, which for a time threatened estrangement between favourite daughter and father. At the age of twenty Mary Ann Evans was a deeply religious young woman, whose faith took the form of a narrow evangelicalism—banning theatres and disapproving novels. At twenty-five she began a translation of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, and finished her task in workmanlike fashion in 1846. A period of great stress followed, complicated by a thwarted love affair, uncompleted studies, and finally by the long illness and death of her father in 1849. Next year, after a prolonged stay abroad, she settled in London for the express purpose of aiding Chapman (a friend of the Brays) in the editorship of *The Westminster Review*. In 1851, by which time she was already deep in the secrets of the *Review*, she was introduced by Herbert Spencer to George Henry Lewes, and three years later commenced that *union libre* with him which was to become so much closer than many formal marriages, and to remain unimpaired down to his death in 1878. It was impossible for her to be married to him, as he had a wife still living from whom he was separated, but not legally divorced. The only bearing of the irregularity of her union with Lewes which has relevance is the fact that it somewhat warped her outlook, and gave an undue prominence to ethical diatribe, to those moral and philosophic asides, which are apt unduly to burden her novels. But the union was unquestionably, upon the whole, a fortunate one for Lewes, for his children, for George Eliot, and not least, for her art. Amusing, half Alsatian, miniature Voltaire that he was, Lewes would have seemed the least likely companion



From Rajon's Engraving of the Drawing by Sir Frederick W. Burton.

George Eliot

in the world for the gravely serious and majestic tenth Muse, whom he was to domesticate for a quarter of a century. But Lewes soon discovered that his *amie* was a genius, no mere talent, and after a little experiment, misinterpreted in 1854, he realised two years later the precise direction in which her genius lay hid. Now Lewes, with all his faults, revered genius; he encouraged and at the same time protected the sensitive nature of its possessor. George Eliot, as she was now to call herself, was just upon thirty-seven when she began the serial publication (in *Blackwood*) of the three provincial tales which first opened wide for her the doors of fame and fortune. Her union with Lewes had been a union of poverty. There was an urgent need to make money, and it appears to have been agreed between the pair that there was at least no harm in the lady's trying her hand at a story. *Amos Barton*, of which a fragment had been tentatively sketched in 1854, was accordingly finished, and appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January, 1857, and Blackwood sent £50 and some very cordial praise in return. The three tales were issued collectively early in 1858. A fortnight after completing *Janet's Repentance* she commenced *Adam Bede*. The best judges received the *Scenes* with much cordiality, Dickens enthusiastically: he alone had the insight to perceive that they were the handiwork of a woman. In these *Scenes from Clerical Life—Scenes of Provincial Life* would have been a more correct title—George Eliot strikes a characteristic note at once—the moral significance of small actions, the interest that underlies the most ordinary characters if observed with imagination, sympathy, compassion. Even more than with Dickens or Thackeray, compassion is the master spring, though it is counterbalanced by the grim figure of Nemesis, a sacrifice to a spirit more modern than that which concludes every volume with merry chimes. George Eliot changed little as a writer except that her interest for abstract morality, apart from characterisation, seems to increase. Her method and expression were already mature in her first book, at any rate in *Janet's Repentance*, which is a story of greater depth and significance than its two predecessors. A born novelist as much as Cromwell was a born general, she produced nothing immature. And no great work is more original than hers. Alone among novelists of her sex she stands meek-eyed under the bitter

reproach of mankind—a woman of superior intellect. The publication of *Adam Bede* on February 1st, 1859, made an immense and widespread sensation. Nothing like it had been known since Charlotte Brontë, also writing under a masculine pseudonym, took the town by storm with *Jane Eyre*.

Faulty as the ending is, and unfair as we feel the writer to be in her analysis of the superficial beauty of Hetty, *Adam Bede* is almost unrivalled among novels for its truth to nature and to ethical cause and effect. The midland village, the farm and the hall with its surrounding park and plantations, can almost be reconstructed from its pages. Mrs. Poyser's few words with Squire Donnithorne are unsurpassable, and impressive in the extreme the lesson of the inevitable consequences of action as brought home to the pleasure-loving but not ungenerous spirit of Arthur. To know that there is a sort of wrong that can never be made up for, and that in some degree all wrong is of this sort, is to know one of the deepest lessons of social morality, and it is this lesson which is burned into the mind by the forcible pathos of *Adam Bede*.

It is not, however, in *Adam Bede*, but in her next novel, or at least the first five books of it (five-sevenths of the whole), that George Eliot seems to us to have reached the highest point of her artistic and moral achievement. And the story of *The Mill on the Floss* (the title is Blackwood's amendment of the authoress's *Sister Maggie*) is especially interesting to lovers of George Eliot, for the same reason that *David Copperfield* is so exceptionally precious to lovers of Dickens. It was published on April 4th, 1860, and the press was by no means so unanimous in its praise as it had been in the case of its predecessor. The intimate psychological truth of the characterisation is not by any means of the obvious kind; the beauty of Maggie's chivalric, passionate, love-craving nature is not to be gauged at sight; but the book is one of those few which *insensibly* wear a deep channel in the mind. The incongruity of the idealistic Maggie falling in love with a white-handed specimen of the walking gentleman genus (“a hairdresser's block”) has been much exaggerated, though it is true that the author hardly seems to realise what a paltry mannikin she has made of this Stephen Guest. One disquieting symptom we admit in the book is the growth

of scientific slang. But such symptoms are wholly absent from her next production, the short, harmonious, and symmetrical story of *Silas Marner* (1861), in which she worked off some of the surplus material of her deep research into forgotten past. For quiet humour our recent literature has few happier scenes than the fireside at the Rainbow with Macey and Winthrop, the butcher and the farrier, holding their immortal controversy as to the reality of ghosts. The finish of *Silas Marner* is superior to that of its predecessors; it has much of the artistic unity of such an idyll as *La Mare au Diable*, and its only defect is a somewhat excessive dependence upon the long arm of coincidence. It marked the end of the first period of artistic impulse. Upon its completion George Eliot felt she had for the time exhausted this reservoir of homeland recollections, and she turned towards foreign observation and historical research to assist her towards a composition of a more independent order. The result was the romance of the times of Savonarola to which she gave the name of *Romola*, and which marks a clearly defined watershed in her career. She began it a young and completed it an old woman, so she said herself in a gloomy retrospect of the libraries she had wrestled with in the agonising throes of this production. Overwork on her books was her besetting sin, as constructive and stylistic ambition was Dickens's, over-emphasis Kingsley's, and a Feste-like masquerading as "Master Parson" Thackeray's.

George Eliot's next novel, *Felix Holt the Radical* (for which Blackwood gave £5,000 in 1866), is a well-constructed tale and in many respects one of the least faulty of her performances. Its lack of abiding interest—and it is certainly the one of her books which takes the least hold upon the memory and imagination—is probably due in the main to its lack of spontaneity. It is the one of her books which approaches nearest to a successful piece of book-making and is consequently the nearest approach to a mediocre performance.

Middlemarch (issued in parts 1871-2), in which she returns to her recollections of mid-England in pre-reform and pre-railroad days, occupies the largest canvas George Eliot ever employed, and it is in many respects the greatest, as it is undoubtedly the most intellectual, of all her novels. It contains sufficient characters and enough material to furnish forth

five or six ordinary novels, and as much fundamental brainwork in it as would make the fortune of four score. The book is in a sense an aftermath of that rich harvest of midlandshire memories which had already borne *Adam Bede*, "Sister Maggie" and *Silas Marner*, and this being so one can only be amazed at the abundance of the yield—the extraordinary richness and variety of the characters thus evoked telescopically from the distant past—the Garths, the Vinceys, the Bulstrodes, the Brookes, the Farebrothers, the Cadwalladers and the rest. So thickly did these characters crowd upon her fancy that she felt constrained to over-complicate her plot badly in order to provide them all with accommodation.

George Eliot never surpassed in profundity or subtlety the characterisation of Gwendolen and Grandcourt in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1875-6). Gwendolen is in some respects a feminine counterpart of Philip Beaufort in Lytton's *Night and Morning*, but how enormously superior in delicacy of conception! The development of Gwendolen from the scene in which she first consults Klesmer on an artist's vocation to that in which she tells Deronda of Grandcourt's death, after she has traversed the whole gamut of humiliating experience, is a masterpiece of living organic portraiture. Grandcourt is living too, a somewhat scenic figure of a grand seigneur, it may be, but vital too, though of him we get merely a glimpse. The fault of *Deronda* is that of *Middlemarch* emphasised, a laborious over-concatenation, with a misplaced wealth of essay-writing. The Jewish part of *Deronda* is disappointing for the same reason that the Italian part of *Romola* is unsatisfactory—it is suggestive of hard study in the British Museum, rather than of actual observation.

Prostrated by the death of Lewes, in November, 1878, she did little further in the way of writing save a volume of laborious gnomic pleasantries already projected; she called it *Theophrastus Such*. In April, 1880, being always much dependent upon the sympathy and affection of one particular person, she decided to marry John Walter Cross, an intimate friend of the Leweses, who had been most helpful and sympathetic during the crisis of 1878. On December 22nd following, she died somewhat suddenly, aged sixty-one, at the newly occupied house, 4, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. She was buried by the side of George Lewes in Highgate cemetery.

CHAPTER V

TENNYSON

"In perfect sincerity I regard him as the noblest poet that ever lived."—EDGAR ALLAN POE.

"Milton never made a verse unconscious of Urania by his side. Wordsworth never lost the sense that he was a consecrated spirit. And Tennyson never forgot that the poet's work was to convince the world of love and beauty; that he was born to do that work, and to do it worthily."—STOPFORD BROOKE.

Juvenilia—*Poems* of 1832—The "Elegies"—*Poems* of 1842—*The Princess*—*In Memoriam*—*Annus Mirabilis*—*Maud*—The Arthurian circle—Last years—Coventry Patmore.

ALFRED TENNYSON, the fourth of twelve children of the rector of Somersby in North Lincolnshire, was born in that village, in the quaint and rambling rectory, on August 6th, 1809. Darwin, Lincoln, Gladstone, and Mendelssohn were all, as it happened, born within a few months of the poet. His grandfather, George Tennyson of Bayens Manor, had been a county magnate with a large estate, but his father the rector, though the eldest son, had been disinherited in favour of a younger brother, which may have been to some extent the cause, or at any rate the aggravation, of a naturally stern and somewhat gloomy temperament. The poet's mother, however, Elizabeth, daughter of Stephen Fytche, vicar of Louth, was sympathetic from the first with the poetic ambitions of the youthful Alfred, who felt himself consecrated to the vocation of poesy with the same unalterable conviction that had characterised Milton, Pope, Thomson, Wordsworth, and Keats. To her he owed a large portion of that in his disposition which was corrective of the inherited "black blood" of the Tennysons.

Between the age of fifteen and seventeen, with the collaboration of his brother Charles, Alfred wrote the larger part of a small volume of precociously imitative verse, for which he was lucky enough to obtain the sum of twenty pounds from a local bookseller. On the afternoon of the publication,¹ which was amiably reviewed in *The Literary Chronicle* and *Weekly Review* of May 19th, 1827, the two boys hired a carriage, and driving over to the sea-shore at

Mablethorpe, shared their triumph with the wind and waves. In February next year, the poet matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He regarded the University curriculum with cold indifference, precisely similar to that of Wordsworth, but his remarkable contour and distinctive personality soon excited the interest of a notable group of young men, including J. R. Spedding, Monckton-Milnes, R. C. Trench, Alford, G. S. Venables, Brookfield, Charles Buller, the historians J. M. Kemble and Charles Merivale, and Henry Hallam's youngest son, Arthur—most of these belonged to a secret society called "The Apostles," which debated social, political, and literary topics. In June, 1829, he won the Chancellor's prize for English verse, with a poem of 250 lines on the subject of Timbuctoo.

In 1830 Tennyson prefixed his name to a thin duodecimo of 154 pages, entitled *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, now a very rare volume, for in addition to such familiar poems as *Claribel*, *Oriana*, *Mariana*, *The Dying Swan*, and the splendid *Ode to Memory*, it contained twenty-three pieces which have entirely disappeared from the Tennysonian canon. The volume was joyously welcomed by Leigh Hunt, and criticised with solemn approval by Arthur Hallam in the moribund *Englishman's Magazine*; Christopher North cudgelled the slender portions of the volume with a superfluous bluntness often verging upon downright vulgarity in the pages of *Blackwood*.

In the summer of 1832, however, Tennyson

¹ "*Poems*, by Two Brothers. 'Hæc nos novimus esse nihil.'—MARTIAL. London: Printed for W. Simpkin & R. Marshall, Stationers' Hall Court; and J. & J. Jackson, Louth. MDCCCXXVII."

and his "more than brother," Arthur Hallam, went touring on the Rhine together, and the poet was persuaded to commit another volume of poems to the press; it was published by Moxon about Christmas, 1832, as "*Poems*, by Alfred Tennyson," but was dated 1833, and contained thirty poems, of which a third have since been suppressed, and most of the remainder partially rewritten by the fastidious author. This volume marks a highly significant advance upon the somewhat cloying sweets of 1830, and first indicates a great poetic destiny for the writer; it contains *The Lady of Shalott* (which shows that Tennyson might have been the baptist of the pre-Raphaelites), *The Miller's Daughter*, *Enone*, *The May Queen*, *The Lotus Eaters*, and *A Dream of Fair Women*, most of them subsequently recast. All in all, a more original and beautiful volume of minor poetry never was added to our literature. The Tennysonian manner here was clearly developed, largely pruned of mannerisms. The command of delicious metres, the rhythmic susurrus of stanzas whose every word is as needful and studied as the flower or scroll of ornamental architecture—yet so much an interlaced portion of the whole, that the special device is forgotten in the general excellence, the colour, which, like the dawn, "flows over the horizon from his pencil in waves so rich that we do not miss the central form," the vibration of that music which is a passion in itself, the scenic pictures which are the counterparts of changeful emotions—all are here, and the poet's work is the epitome of every mode in art.

The volume was well received by three or four hundred lovers of poetry, though a brutal criticism in *The Quarterly*, in which he was pleasantly alluded to as a particular star in the milky way of poetry, of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger, cut Tennyson to the quick. A deeper sorrow by far, however, was now to fall upon the poet, and to tinge the whole colouring of his life and thought for a period of well-nigh twenty years. In the course of a journey taken with his father to Tyrol and Salzburg, Arthur Hallam, his dearest friend, died suddenly at Vienna, on September 15th, 1833.¹

The event plunged the poet into abysmal

gloom, his sorrow seemed for a time to have blotted all joy out of life, and made him long for death. The loving admiration for the youth of twenty-two, which had inspired so many of Arthur Hallam's eminent contemporaries, became in the successive forms of eager hope and ardent regret the master passion of Tennyson's manhood.

After the poems of 1830 and 1832, which had opened before him a brilliant career, he let ten years pass before he again addressed the public, and much of this time was devoted to the elegies which he consecrated and slowly elaborated, with a gradually defining purpose, to the memory of his dead friend. Some of them date from the winter of 1833, others were successively added during the following years. The epithalamium which brings the poems to conclusion was written in 1842; the prologue, half a prayer and half a declaration of faith, is as late as 1849. Viewed as a whole, the fragmentary elegies, eventually woven into a connected poem, portray to us the emotions and the mental speculations which the death of Arthur Hallam evoked in Tennyson. The period of time covered by the memorial poems (as they were first called) is divided by the three Christmas eves; the first concludes a period of unmitigated gloom and staggering faith with section XXX., the second concludes a calmer yet sadly speculative mood with section LXXVIII., the third terminates softened and tranquillised memories and regrets of the deepest beauty, with a more hopeful prospect of what the new year's bells may ring into the world (CIV.); while in the concluding sections the poet's revolt against a hopeless negation is complete, and the poem concludes with a nuptial song in which he celebrates the bridal between his youngest sister Cecilia and Edmund Lushington.

Apart from "the elegies," he had been composing every day and revising his earlier work: old and new together appeared respectively in the two volumes of *English Idylls* and other *Poems* of 1842. These contain a representative selection, of the kinds of poetry at which Tennyson specially excelled, of the lyric and idyllic, while in it we see the ripening of blank verse, which was to be one of Tennyson's greatest contributions to modern poetry. His

¹ He had been seized with a slight fever, from which nothing serious was apprehended; one afternoon his father returned from his daily walk, and found his son asleep, as he supposed, upon the couch. A blood-vessel near the brain had suddenly burst: it was not sleep, but death.



Photograph by the London Stereoscopic Co.

Alfred Tennyson

poetic fortune was now made; he was seen at Holland House, and his greatness was recognised by the first of his contemporaries in literary genius—Dickens, Emerson, and Carlyle. He had joined the "Anonymous Club" in 1838; in 1845 he got a pension of £200.

Overlooking the surpassing excellence and variety of the two volumes of 1842 (which were to Tennyson's total output very much what the two volumes of 1807 were to Wordsworth's) people were in 1847 echoing Wordsworth's complaint of the previous year, that Tennyson ought by this time to have done "greater things" than he had yet achieved. The judgment of posterity will probably be that he had by this time, at the age of thirty-eight, written at least four-fifths of the poetry by which he will eventually be remembered; and in this very year he published *The Princess: A Medley*, the most elaborately finished of his larger poems, in which, with a delightful mixture of seriousness and badinage, he dealt with a theme already touched upon by Aristophanes and by Shakespeare (and subsequently expanded by Tolstoi)—the folly, namely, of a conception which regards Woman as the rival rather than as the complement of Man.

The year 1850 may justly be styled Tennyson's *annus mirabilis*. In it he was married,¹ published the elegies of that Victorian Book of Job which he called *In Memoriam*, was made Poet Laureate, and recast *The Princess* with those intercalary lyrics which women sang—

Between the rougher voices of the men,
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind.

In November, 1852, upon the morning of Wellington's funeral, appeared his great Ode, the first of his poems on behalf of the nation, and a worthy tribute to the great man it commemorated. The boom of cannon and clash of bells can be heard at measured intervals throughout. Like the splendid antiphonal chant written to celebrate the Jubilee of 1887, the metrical form of it is original, and the originality of the conception rendered it obnoxious to the Press.

Another topical poem which attained at once an almost Byronic popularity was the famous *Charge of the Light Brigade*, suggested by a phrase of the celebrated war correspondent (Russell), "Some one had blunder'd." It first appeared in *The Examiner* for December 9th,

1854, and like most of the Laureate's most cherished pieces, was born again in the process of revision. As a vindication of the cult of Mars it was followed in September, 1855, by the most passionate of Tennyson's poems, and his own favourite among them, the spasmodic lyrical monodrama of *Maud*. This was primarily an expansion of the beautiful "stanzas" commencing

Oh, that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again,

contributed to a keepsake miscellany called *The Tribute* in 1837. The excellence of *Maud* does not reside either in the story or in the denunciation of a cankered peace in which "the shopkeepers" detected an objectionable tendency, but in the magnificent lyrics which form the nerve centres of the poems, and reach a climax in "Come into the garden, Maud," in which the pulse of the lover thrills and throbs through all created things. As a masterpiece of rhythm, too, *Maud* must rank among the wonders of art; the short lyrical metres with a double beat are alternated with long anapaestic measures in which language-shaping is carried to a point of perfection to which no predecessor and but one successor of Tennyson's can at all claim to have attained.

Tennyson was henceforth to apply the most faultless technique modern poet has ever achieved to works primarily of decoration and design. The period of the *Idylls of the King*, commencing with *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*, had in the autumn of 1859 commenced. It was varied by ballads and by the later stories and idylls of consummate workmanship, such as those contained in the most popular of all his volumes, the *Enoch Arden*, etc., of 1864.

Yet the smoothness of his academy verse, as we may almost call it, was varied from time to time by poems of a manlier fibre, instinct with power, sometimes humorous, more rarely stern in truth, frequently quite perfect in form—*The Death of Lucretius* for instance, the *Hymn to Virgil*, and *Frater Ave*, the dialect poems, the *Epilogue to The Charge of the Heavy Brigade*, or that miraculous blossom of an aged oak, *Crossing the Bar*.

The criticism of Tennyson's later works, his great epic upon the Arthurian legendary, and his

At Shiplake Church on June 13th, 1850, to Emily Sarah Sellwood.

dramas, has consisted too largely of ephemeral attempts to find superficial reasons for a positive failure in work which is a failure not positively but relatively in comparison with Tennyson's best work. Both were the works of a great lyrical poet and a supreme master of description, metre and imaginative phrasing, who sought in vain to transform his best energies from the lyrical to the epical and dramatic sphere. Tennyson was perfectly justified in transporting the legend into a modernised cloud-cuckoo-land such as that in which the doings narrated in the *Princess* had been transacted. The fault was not that in a Victorian poem dedicated to the memory of Prince Albert the type idealised was meek and quite other than mediæval, but that when Tennyson leaves lyric, Theocritan idyll and description for character drawing, dramatic situation and dialogue, he tends to become languid, tedious, and obscure. His ineradicable *dolcezza*, so fascinating in love-lorn lyrics and strains of tender regret for the beauty of things past, is out of place as the staple of epic or drama, where poetising around, however exquisite, can never compensate for the lack of directness and rapidity.

The Arthurian cycle was practically finished in 1872; and during the next twelve years, spent largely at his second home of Aldworth, near Haslemere (built 1868), Tennyson laboured industriously at a series of historical dramas in blank verse, designed to some extent apparently to fill the gaps in the Shakespearean series of chronicles. That the experiment was almost a complete failure was owing not so much to any defect of power or poetic adaptability on the part of the poet—although action and spirited dialogue were manifestly not his *forte*—as to the circumstances in which the attempt was made. Historical dramas *per se*, especially of a serious tendency, are seldom anything but extremely dull from the reader's point of view: they need the stage, and the wretched dramatic taste and stage organisation of the time made it almost impossible for a good dramatic work either to be written or to be produced upon the popular stage. The same kind of apologetic treatment cannot be extended to his minor pieces—*The Falcon*, *The Cup*, and *The Promise of May*—which have but little of dramatic vigour or interest to commend them.

In 1880, in his seventy-first year, he published

a volume of *Ballads and other Poems*, which contains little of permanent value except *The Revenge*. This volume illustrates in a striking manner the decay of his poetical faculty. His lyrics are no longer those of sentiment, emotion, or passion, but those of event—in other words, ballads, the subjects of which were often suggested by the papers. The best known of these are *Rizpah*, *The Revenge*, *Lucknow*. Compensation may be found in the dialect (Lincolnshire and Irish) pieces, of which the virility, true observation, and rich humour astonished even the most robust of the Laureate's admirers.

During the summer of 1883, Tennyson went for a cruise in the North Sea on the *Pembroke Castle* in the company of Gladstone, who offered him a peerage, with which he was invested in January, 1884. Next year appeared *Tiresias, and other Poems* dedicated to his old friend "Fitz," and containing, with the autobiographical *Ancient Sage*, two dialect poems of merit and the noble lines *To Virgil*, written in a seventeen-syllable metre of the greatest subtlety and beauty:

All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a single word.

In 1886 he suffered a cruel bereavement in the loss of his dearly loved Lionel. In 1888 he had a severe illness. In December, 1889, appeared *Demeter, and other Poems*; these were wonderful productions for a man of his age, though not particularly memorable in themselves—unless, indeed, we exclude, with one other, *Owd Roä*, the suggestive *Merlin and the Gleam*, and the melodious echoes of *Far, Far Away*. In October, 1889, he had written *Crossing the Bar* on a day when he went from Aldworth to Farringford; he made it in his mind and wrote it out after dinner. A few days before his death he told his son that it was always to come at the end of all editions of his poems. It is a lyric which is on a level with his best work—such lines as

But such a tide as moving seems asleep
Too full for sound and foam,

are of the eternal stamp.

He had felt Robert Browning's death in December, 1889, deeply, but with something of the quiet resignation of age. At this time he amused himself by carving and painting in water colours. He still went walks and entertained callers, reading many novels, and still working; of *Clarissa Harlowe*, which he read

at this time he said: "I like those great *still* books"; of Jane Austen, too, he was always very fond. The whole record of his last days is full of quiet interesting talk, not great, but showing a lofty and active mind. In 1891 he wrote a Robin Hood drama, *The Foresters*, containing fragments of song as tunable as of old for production in New York. In 1892 he went for a last cruise to Jersey, and in September looked over the proofs of his last volume, *The Death of Ænone*, which was to appear posthumously. But by Michaelmas he was lying seriously ill at Aldworth. Six days later the signs of fatal syncope appeared, and in the moonlight of the early morning that followed, October 6th, 1892, the great poet of our time passed quietly away. On October 12th he was buried in front of

Chaucer's grave in Westminster Abbey. His wife survived him barely three years.

No poet since Pope can have enriched our language with so many memorable phrases. Take away the felicities for which his work found utterance during a brief period of about twelve years, and how vastly poorer must our English tongue seem in consequence! How long must not the world have been on tiptoe to hear these melodious outbursts of elemental song! Orpheus with his lute can hardly have worked greater wonders in savage places than has Tennyson with the haunting refrains of his song-snatches, the yearful music of his love-plaints, the forlorn sadness of his elegies, or the "mellow lin-lan-lone" of his evening chimes.

Of the miniature Parnassus of poetry inspired by Victoria's laureate, the most interesting unit by far is Patmore's *Angel in the House*.

Coventry Patmore was born at Woodford on July 23rd, 1823. His father, P. G. Patmore, was literary adviser to Colburn, editor of *The New Monthly* between Hook and Ainsworth, and the friend of Lamb and Hazlitt, of whom he left some anecdotes of considerable charm in a book called *My Friends and Acquaintances*. The Patmores lost their money in railways, but through literary friends, the Procters and Milneses, Coventry got a nomination at the British Museum under Panizzi in 1846. Not a bibliographer or a linguist, but an assiduous worker and something of a mystic and a recluse with very exclusive views on subjects of art, he made a furrow of his own, with deep ideas and few friends. Many early sections of his chief poem were written on Museum slips after composition on his way to his work from his rooms in North London and talked over with a congenial colleague, the late Dr. Richard Garnett. His marriage took place in 1847, to the lady who looked like a medallion—one of the perfect wives whom Wordsworth, Browning, Tennyson, Carlyle, J. S. Mill were so eager to exalt. The coral-reef construction of *The Angel in the House* (1854-62), in honour of this wife with a Norman face and "large sweet eyes, clear lakes of love," is evident from the languor which one cannot escape in turning from *The Morning Call* to *The Violets*, and so to *Going to Church*, *The Dance*, *Love in Idleness*, *The Wedding*, etc., etc. A succession of tiny episodes in courtship interrupted by "preludes" which give an opportunity of a slight variation of theme, but all linked together by "the coupled bells of rhyme"—such is the composition of this popular poem. A certain psychological insight with isolated details of rare charm, and with occasional beauties of simplified and unified image—all this it has, but much that is overwrought, mawkish, even flatulent; the whole distinctly sub-Tennysonian (the Tennyson of *Dora* and *The Brook*). Patmore had a veneration for Tennyson and his art which that master can never be said to have quite seriously reciprocated, and after the laureate's marriage they drifted quite apart. Patmore never travelled so far in any other man's territory. He was a Sir Willoughby Patterne, and could see little merit in any opinions, ideas, or literature that came into being outside his own premises and preserves. Some tolerance he had for Keats, the study of whom made him a pre-Raphaelite before his time; but his odes are Keatsian in ambition rather than accomplishment. The delicate love idyll of *Amelia* (1878) is perhaps the happiest of his poems. His beautiful wife had died in 1862, and soon after he joined the Roman Church, from which her influence had alone restrained him. But, happily, angels' visits to Patmore were neither so few nor so far between as might have been anticipated. He was twice subsequently married. In 1877 he brought out *The Unknown Eros and other Odes*, in 1895 some very interesting meditation in prose, *Rod, Root, and Flower*. His second wife had brought large means. He left the Museum (to which he later presented a sumptuous vellum copy of Thomas Aquinas) and dwelt in Sussex and then at Lymington, where he died on November 26th, 1896. The seizing portrait by Sargent in the National Portrait Gallery excites an interest in the man which his poetry alone might possibly fail to excite in us, and all seem agreed that underneath the semblance of regulated calm a curious welter of stormy elements was commonly brewing. He was a concatenation of contrasts. Far from an insipid amicability, his dominant characteristic was a rugged angularity, steeped in Rembrandt-like contrasts of light and gloom. His sardonic tongue excited fear. His self-centred talk came to fill a larger and larger segment in the circle of his conversation. As a critic he was deep, serious, and quite remorseless—without pity, upon occasion, even for himself (*Principle in Art*,* 1889). "He had no perception of the sublime in other men's writings, or of the ridiculous in his own." Yet he had qualities of a capricious greatness—almost magnanimity—and of all the minor poets of his time his hold upon posterity is not unlikely to prove the most tenacious.

CHAPTER VI

ROBERT BROWNING

"His problem is always to show what are the really noble elements which are eternally valuable in spite of failure to achieve tangible results. . . . Like Carlyle, he protests, though rather by implication than direct denunciation, against the utilitarian or materialistic view of life, and finds the divine element in the instincts which guide and animate every noble character. When he is really inspired by sympathy for such emotions, he can make his most grotesque and his most far-fetched analyses subservient to poetry of the highest order. It can hardly be denied that his intellectual ingenuity often tempts him to deviate from his true function, and such deviations are not to be excused simply because they result from an excess instead of a deficiency of intellectual acuteness."—SIR LESLIE STEPHEN.

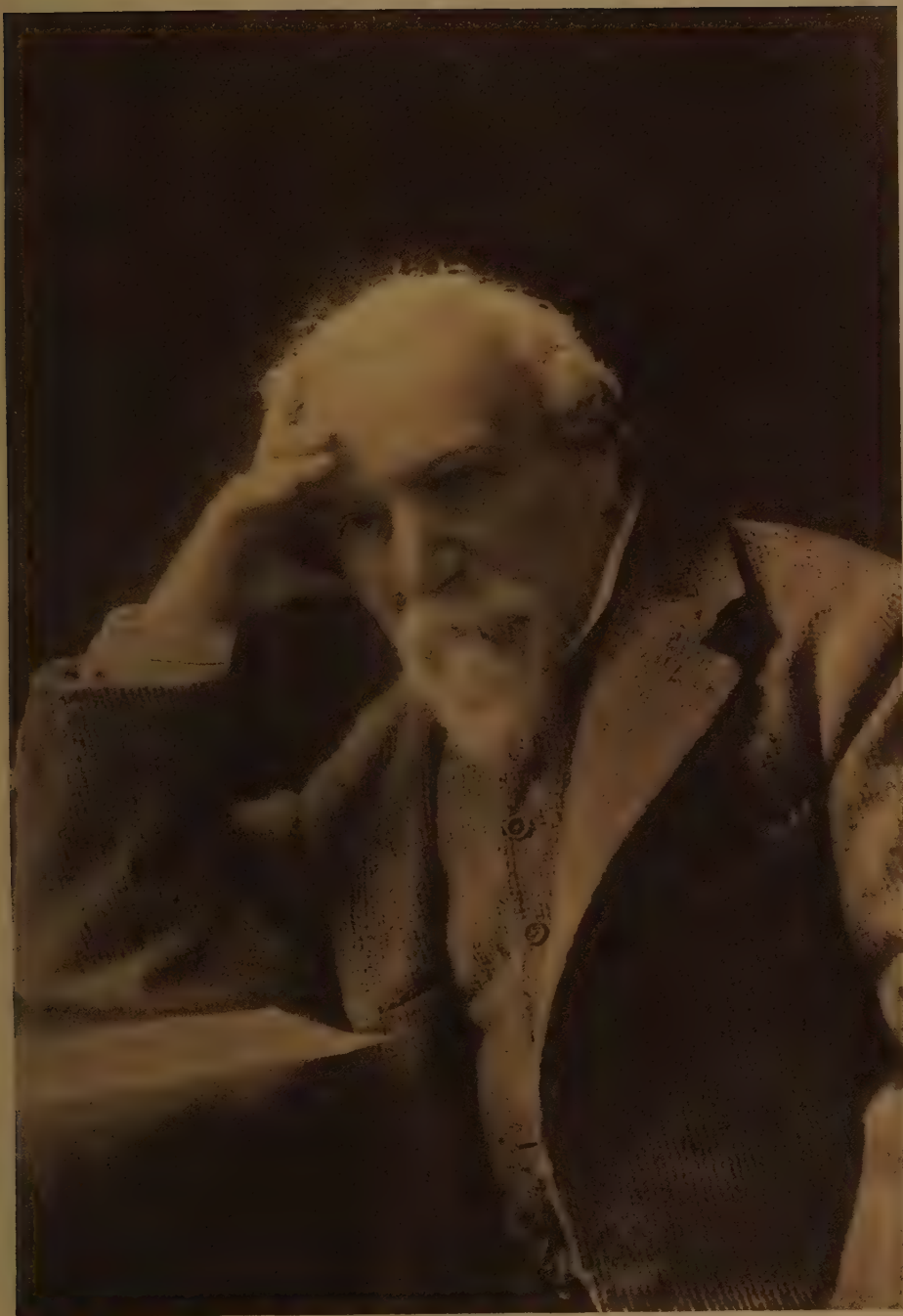
ROBERT BROWNING, the son of a clerk in the Bank of England who married the daughter of a small Dundee shipowner named Wiedemann, was born in Southampton Street, Camberwell, May 7th, 1812. He was precocious as a boy in physical activity, in languages and in music, wrote Byronic verse at twelve, and at fourteen was steeped in Keats and in Shelley, the star and the sun-treader of his first published poem, *Pauline*. He was also influenced by the Greek lectures of George Long at University College, and by a friendship with Alfred Domett, the poet, subsequently, of New Zealand scenery and adventure, and the Waring of Browning's life-like sketch which goes by that name. Before he was twenty, a discussion between the son and his father, who was in possession of a competency, had led to an agreement that Robert should live a life of pure culture out of which art might spontaneously arise. By December, 1832, when he was yet in his twenty-first year, he had already completed his first poem, *Pauline* (1833), the fragment of a confession by an ineffectual poet to the woman whom he loves, written in Shelleyan blank verse, and full of descriptions, charged with lyric emotion and exquisite fancy. The beauty of the phrasing so impressed the youthful Rossetti that he transcribed the whole poem from the copy in the British Museum. During 1833-4 Browning commenced his travel education, visiting St. Petersburg and North Italy, and in the spring of 1835 was published *Paracelsus*, in the composition of which he had been absorbed two years.

The character of *Paracelsus*, as a pioneer of

scientific thought, is developed in the form of a dialogue between Paracelsus and friends, Festus and his wife Michal, and Aprile, an Italian poet, who vaguely foreshadows Sordello. It is noted for individual lines of extraordinary power, for four interspersed lyrics of much beauty, and as illustrating the fondness for learned subjects and out-of-the-way reading which became so characteristic of the poet. In this year Browning became acquainted with Macready, and the result was a striking manifestation of his rapidly growing analytical power in the form of a five-act drama in blank verse, *Strafford*.¹ This was followed in 1840 by the confused and difficult psychological epic of *Sordello*. The confusions that sprang from too great rapidity and incoherence of thought are here shown to be much the same in the event. The fault of rapidity alone was Browning's, yet towards the end of his career we find him speaking of *Sordello* (only half ironically) as "quite unintelligible."

We now come to the rare and exquisite masque-like drama of *Pippa Passes*, and by almost general consent the most perfect of Browning's longer and more ambitious efforts. The leading motive, that of the little silk-winder of Asolo, Felippa or Pippa, passing from one scene to another and unconsciously influencing the conscience of one group after another by means of the seed-pearls of songs which she carols in the new year's sunshine is said to have flashed upon Browning as he was walking in a wood near Dulwich. Content with her life of toil and her one annual holiday,

¹ Performed at Covent Garden, May 1st, 1837.



Photograph by W. H. Grove.

Robert Browning

Pippa springs up from bed in her garret resolved not to squander a mite of her twelve hours' treasure.

Pippa Passes was issued in 1841 as No. 1 of a series of volumes of poetry to be called *Bells and Pomegranates*, sixteen double-columned pages of close print for sixpence. Later volumes were increased in number of pages and raised in price. In rapid succession appeared other numbers of the series: *King Victor and King Charles* (1842); *Dramatic Lyrics*, which included *Cavalier Times*, *My Last Duchess*, *Johannes Agricola*, *The Pied Piper*, etc. (1842); *The Return of the Druses* (1843); *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843); *Colombe's Birthday* (1844). *The Blot in the 'Scutcheon* was a three-act tragedy produced by Macready at Drury Lane. The poet and the manager quarrelled over it; and Browning thought that not half enough had been done to ensure its success. Yet, according to Browning, "If applause means success, the play thus maimed and maltreated was successful enough." Phelps, who with Miss Helen Faucit had taken the leading part in it, revived it in 1848 at Sadler's Wells, again with applause. Yet it ran only a few nights. *Colombe's Birthday* was not put on the stage till April, 1853, when Miss Faucit produced it at the Haymarket.

In the autumn of 1844 Browning paid his second visit to Italy. Next year he published the seventh number of *Bells and Pomegranates*—the admirable volume called *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). This, like the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842, consisted of short poems, and included many of those most frequently reprinted in selections, e.g. the stirring ballad *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, *The Italian in England*, *The Englishman in Italy*, *The Tomb at St. Praxed's*, *The Lost Leader*, *Time's Revenge*, *Pictor Ignotus*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*.

It was in 1845 that Browning met his future wife, Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett (1806—1861), herself a poet of high rank, known already as the author of *The Seraphim* (1838) and *Poems* (1844).

She was a very delicate woman, who spent most of her life on a sofa. Her father had discouraged a more active life; he apparently made up his mind that she must die, and was unwilling to let her marry or to travel for her health. He said afterwards of Browning: "I have no objection to the young man, but my

daughter should have been thinking of another world!" It was useless to hope that he would ever consent to the marriage, and the two were secretly married at Marylebone Parish Church (September 12th, 1846). A few days afterwards they left England together. Not even the remarkable improvement in Mrs. Browning's health and her perfect happiness would reconcile "papa" to the marriage. Her letters to him were unopened. The two poets went first to Pisa, then to Florence, where, after some changes, they settled down in the apartments in the old palace known as Casa Guidi. Here their only child, the painter Robert Browning, was born in 1849.

In the year of his marriage Browning published the last number (the eighth) of *Bells and Pomegranates*, containing two of the most popular and beautiful of his longer poems, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. In 1850 followed *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day*, and two poems which deal with the Judgment and Resurrection and other Christian beliefs in a novel way, but in no sceptical spirit.

It was not till 1855 that Browning published his next work, *Men and Women*, a collection in two volumes of short pieces of the same type as the *Dramatic Romances* and *Lyrics*. Here he reached, perhaps, his highest level of sustained achievement. A more wonderful gallery of soul-pictures has never been produced. Artists, musicians, philosophers, statesmen, lovers, and men of the world unveil their characters, as it were, unconsciously. Nothing more picturesque, more incisive, more full of insight into character, has ever been written. Notably among these recreations in monologue we have the pathetic story of a divine painter, Andrea del Sarto, whose aspirations are dwarfed and stunted by his beautiful soulless wife, and the incarnation of a casuistical divine of high standing and no definite belief worth speaking of, in Bishop Blougram's Apology. These are in blank verse, but the little drama of *In a Balcony* and the strangely entitled *A Toccata of Galuppi's* and *A Grammarian's Funeral* are all in lyrical measures. The second of these linked subtle emotion to musical sound in a manner only too rare in Browning. *The Grammarian's Funeral* is a penetrating tribute to the Renaissance spirit working in the mind of the close students who, in the persons of such men as the Etiennes and Scaligers, restored classic texts to the modern world.

In 1856 Browning lost the good friend of his early life, John Kenyon, who had been a school-fellow of his father, and to whom Mrs. Browning had dedicated *Aurora Leigh*. Legacies to the poet and his wife left them more than comfortably off. Much of the next three years were spent in Italy, at Florence, the baths of Lucca and Siena, and at Paris and Rome, where the Brownings saw a good deal of Hawthorne and Leighton and other artists. Here he wrote *Sludge the Medium*. During the spring of 1861, Mrs. Browning's health suddenly declined and she died at Casa Guidi in the poet's arms on June 29th—thus ending one of the most devoted and romantic alliances between a man and woman of genius that the history of literature affords. In 1861, greatly crushed in mind and spirit, Browning came to settle in London, at 19, Warwick Crescent, to be near his father and sister. In 1863 he emerged from the doleful exclusion of a life of retrospection and regrets, and began to mix more and more freely in the intellectual society of the capital, among whom at dinner-parties, private views, and concerts he gradually became a most familiar figure. Meanwhile, during summer vacations in Brittany at Pornic, he wrote most of the important volume of *Dramatis Personæ*, containing much of his finest and most characteristic work. Published in 1864, this volume, like *Men and Women*, is a collection of dramatic monologues or soliloquies of persons introduced to us in some revealing situation. It contains besides *Mr. Sludge*, at once an exposure and an extraordinarily subtle apologia for the mediumistic pranks of Home and other spiritualistic mediums, and *Caliban upon Setebos*, suggesting a process of development in religious ideas of primitive man, *Abt Vogler*, and *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, exercises of vicarious thinking on behalf of the modern German composer and the mediæval Jewish philosopher, the beautiful Italian vignette, *A Face*, and the noble but strange and abrupt defiance to Death in the long lines of *Prospice*.

In November to December, 1868, January to February, 1869, was published, in four successive monthly volumes, *The Ring and the Book*. The reception of *The Ring and the Book* was a triumph for the author, who, now close on the age of sixty, for the first time took his proper place in the forefront of living men of letters. The sale of his earlier works, which

had been so fluctuating that at one time not a single copy of any one of them was asked for during six months, now became regular and abundant, and the night of Browning's long obscurity was over. A second edition of the entire *Ring and the Book* was called for in 1869. It consists of twelve "melodramatic" monologues, each dealing with a different aspect and point of view of a famous Roman *cause célèbre*—a murder case in which the views of the prisoner, of Rome by sections, of the advocates, and, finally, the summing-up of the Pope, the final court of appeal, are heard in turn (in a very rough and unkempt blank verse for the most part). The poem was held to be a *tour de force*, and to have read it through was justly held in exclusive society to be a considerable achievement.

Browning's volumes after 1870 show in general a marked falling-off in metrical finish and coherence though no diminution of psychological subtlety or analytic power. *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* (1871) and *Fifine at the Fair* (1872) are two curiously sophistical pleadings respectively for *laissez-faire* and opportunism in politics and libertinism in conduct which the poet puts into the mouths of Napoleon III. and a Don Juan of modern Pornic. In these volumes, most of them long, and in the elvish and ugly sensationalism of *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* and the chaotic welter of *Pacchiarotto*, the purely intellectual elements are rapidly overcoming the imaginative. The contest went on steadily, with the result that sweetness was more and more ousted by a bizarrerie which passed for strength, and which reached its climax in *Parleyings with Certain People*. Whoever will work hard at such poems may find much recondite learning and mental activity in them; they are a sort of quarry of ideas like *Sordello* and *Paracelsus*, but the ideas are in such a jagged, ugly, and useless shape that little use can be found for them. The poems seem to have been written almost exclusively for the benefit of the Browning Society, and it is difficult in poems ranging from five to twenty-one thousand lines in length to find a rare oasis of lucid, intelligible, artistic finish. Nor is it much consolation to learn as in *Pacchiarotto* that the poet is whistling and not even attempting to sing.

In 1887 appeared the *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, an undeserved compliment as far as most of these



From a Drawing by Field Talfourd.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

obscurissimi viri are concerned. At length, on the very day of the poet's death, appeared his last volume, *Asolando: Fancies and Facts*, dated from Asolo on October 15th, 1889. During this period it is too perceptible that the subtle imaginative and psychological power was degenerating into a mechanical and hair-splitting acuteness, the copious verbosity into an endless garrulity. At the time of the

Parleyings it must be noted that he was already seventy-five, and the self-complacency produced by the adoration of a coterie was seriously infecting the quality of his work. He died in the presence of his sister and his son at the Palazzo Rezzonico, Venice, on December 12th, 1889, and was buried in Westminster Abbey on the last day of that year.

If he is not a great dramatist, Browning is a great intellectual interpreter of the mind of man as he approaches action. He dramatises the movement of thought and feeling psychologically. The very fact that he lacks sentiment and is deficient in mood—the tender melancholy of Gray, for example, the passionate yearning of Shelley, the meditative rapture of Wordsworth, or the infinite regret of Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears"—is probably to the advantage of the positive clearness and nice definition of Browning's interpreting intellect in dealing with human character. Browning cannot ecstasise us by poetic *tendresse*; he cannot excite us by depicting action; he can exhilarate us by his nimble appreciation of character and motive. It would seem almost as if what Browning's poetry primarily attracted was the curiosity of highly intellectual people. It fails to haunt the memory; it fails to throw a spell over us by its grace, its perfume, or its lingering music. The points wherein Browning does succeed in striking the imagination hot are, first, his power of entering into the mental raptures and aspirations of men whose culture and environment have separated them widely from our own; and secondly, the tonic quality of his joy in existence, which enables him to dive, as it were, in his thought into the very centre of the glow of youth and of life.

Dickens may perhaps be described as the Eye of Victorian Literature (his was one of the most piercing in any literature); Tennyson was the Ear, attuned to the subtlest melodies of Nature; Thackeray, the Koheleth or Preacher in the wilderness, lamenting over the Mataiotes Mataioteton; Eliot, the impending brow; Browning, the psychologist, expounding some far-off point of view. Tennyson was essentially and ostensibly a poet, in his life, his blue cloak, his mind and his study, stored with intaglios of the thought of all ages, always sounding and remodelling his verses so that they shall attain the maximum of sweetness and symmetry. He was a recluse. Browning dissembled his poethood, successfully disguised his Muse under the semblance of a stock merchant, was civil to his fellow-men, and, though nervous with bores, encountered every one he met as if expecting to receive more than he could impart. In Tennyson's poetry we are always discovering new beauties. In Browning, contrariwise, we are continually finding new blemishes. Why he chose rhythm and metre for seven-eighths of his purpose is still a profound mystery. But there are circumstances in his life to invest it with a legend which the commonplaceness of his later years and of much of his poetry can by no means efface. It is well said of Browning that he missed the morbid over-refinement of the age. The processes of his mind were sometimes even a little coarse and always delightfully direct. The vibration of his loud nasal voice, his hard fist on the table, would make very short work with cobwebs. In the very prime of his years, at thirty-three, this robust, masterful, strong-fibred man fell violent into the pangs of a first love with the mind and expression of an invalid poetess of forty, who wrote him sympathetic letters from her couch. With infinite difficulty, owing to the singular Turkish propensities of the "indulgent" father, he procured a personal introduction, and the sight of this frail woman with the fine long hair and pathetic eyes of a King Charles spaniel, "hardly embodied at all" and as "shy as some soft brown bird," caused the cup of his mystic love to brim over with enthusiasm. At first she repelled further advances. A faded invalid, with sad memories of her best-loved brother's death, a blind poet, as it were, with books for teachers and visions as sole company, she felt that this brilliant youth, with a rich future before him, was prepared to sacrifice all for an imaginative dream. Some months of correspondence of a volubility perhaps without precedent even in the annals of lovers, in which all the ritual of vows and protestations is as solemnly performed as if for the first time, were needed to convince "Ba" (as the future Mrs. Browning is known to her lover) that she was loved not for her attributes, but for herself alone. Then the letters are resumed on a tide of lyric love more full and overwhelming than before. Both sets of epistles are highly characteristic with it all. Miss Barrett, with her irrelevant learning, her Greek and Hebrew quotations, her garrulous epistolising round, above, and under each tiniest lover's incident from every point of view; Browning, turbid with thought, throttling each sentence in the middle with some parenthetical torment, and all the time standing as an angel by the door of his lady's dungeon and proffering the key of Good Counsel by flight—stealthily the while preparing the escape from the tyrannical and worse than Edgeworthian "papa." This singular romance of the union of two such rare and poetic natures has few episodes to match it—so vivid and gracious and tender. Each poet seemed raised to a higher power by the association: Elizabeth Barrett to write *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, in which autobiography is for once in her life united with strong original emotion (and to catch some of Robert's tricks both of vigour and incoherence in *Aurora Leigh*); he to write *Men and Women*. Some of her new enthusiasms were not less hectic, nor alien to her husband than those revealed in her *Early Poems*. But the enlargement of life to both was far more than compensation. And at the end they were wholly one, in perfect sympathy and trust.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRONTËS

"A case of popularity, a beguiled infatuation, a sentimentalised vision, determined largely by the accidents and circumstances originally surrounding the manifestation of their genius . . . the romantic tradition of the Brontës has been essentially helped by a force independent of any one of their applied faculties—by the attendant image of their dreary, their tragic history, their loneliness and poverty of life. That picture has been made to hang before us as insistently as the vividest page of *Jane Eyre* or of *Wuthering Heights*. If these things were stories, as we say, and stories of a lively interest, the medium from which they sprang was above all in itself a story. . . ."—HENRY JAMES.

HEREDITARY and local influences were both potent in forming the Brontë sisters: on that all are agreed. In blood they were probably of Celtic or Iberian origin on both sides. The father, Pat Prunty, as an Irish Churchman, was of course a staunch Protestant; he came to England, took a Cambridge degree, and, to avert the stigma of hedge-priesthood, by a clever stroke of the pen converted his name to Brontë. The Rev. Patrick Brontë abjured his native bogs for ever, served four curacies in the eastern and northern counties of England, married a Cornish lady, Maria Branwell, in 1812—he was then thirty-five and his bride twenty-nine—cherished literary ambitions, published little books of rustic morality, buried his wife in 1821, and died parson of Haworth, after twenty years' incumbency, in 1861. Charlotte was born during one of the curacies, at Thornton, in the parish of Bradford, on April 21st, 1816. Emily followed Patrick Branwell, on July 30th, 1818. In February, 1820, the new incumbent brought his wife and six weakly little children to the parsonage of Haworth, the village some four miles above Keighley on the road leading up towards the moors, which was to the genius of the Brontës that which Nohant was to the genius of George Sand.

After their mother's death in September, 1821, the children, still and demure by nature, knowing no other children, precocious both in imagination and intellect, were indeed solitary. A year later, a fragile, quaintly attired, snuff-taking old aunt came from Cornwall to super-

intend the household. Two years later these delicate children were transplanted to a rough charity school; the small reserve of strength they had was undermined by the lack of nourishment due to sluttish cooking, and the two eldest sisters, Maria (the Helen Burns of *Jane Eyre*) and Elizabeth, died in 1825. The motherless daughters became more reserved than ever, and more devoted to their intoxicating hero-worship, day-dreaming on the moors and secret scribbling in the school-room.

Each of the Brontë sisters had a desk full of novels, romances, and plays in miniature. Charlotte, Emily, and Anne clubbed together, and printed a collection of verses in 1846. But the first thing of genius to emerge from these secret repositories was the astonishing novel of *Wuthering Heights*, commenced in 1845, before Emily was twenty-eight, and published in December, 1847. The strangely self-centred and somewhat morose girl had never heard of *Manon* or *André*, and knew little, if anything, we may be sure, of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, or *The Sorrows of Werther*, yet she produced a story of love, love in *excelsis*, love its own exceeding great reward, love transcending the ordinary limits of time and space, which marked it out as a book of absolute originality and sphinx-like power: a tale, too, of tragedy in which from the first we breathe the "fresh dark air of tragic passion and presage." *Wuthering Heights*, in fact, by reason of its sincerity, its freedom from affectation, triviality, or verbiage, of any kind, is, despite its im-



From the Painting by G. Richmond.

Charlotte Brontë

perfect or embryonic art, an almost unique book. In strangeness and weirdness it is doubtful if there be anything in the Radcliffe, Fouqué, or Hoffmann schools to rival it; yet the greater part of the plot might have been enacted in many a lonely moorland farm in Britain. As for the three figures of Heathcliffe, his Cathy, and Hindley Earnshaw—where shall we match them? The eerie creations of R. L. Stevenson appear of puny construction by the side of the rude pastels of this hectic, untutored governess.

There is nothing perhaps of Charlotte Brontë's quite so suggestive of immature genius in the throes of self-deliverance as this solitary novel of Emily's. But it was Charlotte, after all, in virtue of her stronger health, firmer character, and more irrepressible energy, who made the half of Europe responsive to those heart-throbs of the Haworth schoolroom. She had a stronger and more contriving brain than any of her sisters, and it was her design that they should emancipate themselves from "going out" by setting up a school of their own. As a preliminary step to this she carried off Emily to learn French in a school at Brussels during eight months in 1842; she herself returned in 1843 for another whole year, in the course of which that "Napoleon de Pensionnat," M. Heger, instructed her, to her great benefit, in the laws of composition and rhetoric. Master and pupil were alike twenty-six, and they had strong intellectual affinities, no more than this, at least on Heger's side, though on Charlotte's it must be premised that admiration shaded into a somewhat warmer sentiment. The platonic attachment that sprang up between the pair was eventually frozen by Madame Heger's total lack of sympathy. But the emotional experience which she had gained, the intensity of feeling from which she had suffered, could hardly be expected to find a normal expression in the career of Charlotte Brontë. Stifled and repressed from her earliest school-days, those passions and fevers of the blood struck inwards, and kindled an answering fire in that deep, smouldering imagination.

At sixteen she was already at home in the practice of literary composition. At twenty-six, the torch with which the proximity of Heger threatened her emotional being was

applied unhesitatingly to her literary style, rendering it terse, vivid, energetic. We must, by the aid of some such considerations as these, try and find an approach to an explanation of the miracle by which, as much in defiance of ordinary plausibility as was the case in 1748, when a fat little printer of Fleet Street thrilled the whole of Europe, and excited a perfect frenzy of admiration for *Clarissa*, this prim little sister of the moorland parsonage, with the incredible tale of her love for her "master," took possession of the reading world as with a whirlwind, and rattled the bones of all the stones in Christendom.

The first book she completed for press about the same time that Emily was putting final touches to *Wuthering Heights* was *The Professor*. Brown paper was scarce at Haworth and the book made many peregrinations in publisher-land in the self-same wrapper. In July, 1847, as a forlorn hope, she sent it to Smith, Elder & Co. Their reader, W. S. Williams, detected enough stamina in the book to request a regular three-volume novel from the same hand. Anything from "Mr. Currer Bell," as Charlotte called herself (Emily was Ellis Bell), would, in the consecrated phrase, "receive careful attention." Accordingly, on August 24th, 1847, Currer Bell sent to Cornhill, "per rail, a manuscript entitled *Jane Eyre*," which was accepted and published in three volumes by October 16th.

Despite the lack of humour and the ignorance of life and the world which the book reveals, the glow and energy of the narrative fully suffice to explain its success. This amazing little governess was not astonished by ' ' is in the least, but she was rendered indignant by the attacks which soon began to be heard against the morality of *Jane Eyre*. There was much outspokenness and much unconventionality about the book, but it was not this that caused the outcry.¹ For the first time the voice of a woman was heard without concealment, pleading a passionate tale of love; not the fiery heat and ardour of a man's passion, but a woman's subdual of all other faculties and feelings to the sway of intense love. Since *Othello* was produced in 1610, it is doubtful if certain of the cries that come from the heart of passion had been so faithfully rendered. The

¹ Lady Eastlake, indeed, in *The Quarterly*, December, 1848, went so far as to say that if *Jane Eyre* were written by a woman, it must be by one who had forfeited the right to the society of her sex. G. H. Lewes once at lunch had the temerity to say to Charlotte, "We ought to get on; we have both written naughty books!"

sève originale appeared to be well-nigh exhausted in this one effort, for when her second novel of *Shirley* was launched to meet the favouring gale in October, 1849, it was found to be strong in satire, description, and observation; but in the distinctive and intensive qualities comparatively weak, and consequently dull. Before it appeared the two sisters Emily and Anne had followed Branwell into the churchyard which opened out from the parsonage garden at Haworth. Charlotte, upon the appearance of her second book, had to make another visit to London (a first had been undertaken with Anne in 1846), and, shy as she was, to submit to some of the penalties of successful authorship. Her literary hero was Thackeray (successor in 1852 to the Iron Duke's throne in her affections), whom she considerably embarrassed by her solemn dedication of *Jane Eyre*. But she tried in vain to fathom the great snobologer. His irony baffled her, and he was consummately bored by her *grand sérieux*. Her third novel, *Villette*, appeared almost simultaneously with Mrs. Gaskell's *Ruth* at the commencement of 1853, and in it we have a reincarnation of the great Brontë qualities, with several interesting additions. Lacking none of the intensity and audacity of *Jane*, it has more of subtlety and style.

The character of M. Paul Emanuel is a more finished portrait than anything in *Jane Eyre*—*Villette* is inferior, if at all, only in a certain ruggedness and bigness of ensemble. More even than its predecessors it is a transcription of actual experience. Lucy Snowe is the authoress, Emanuel is M. Heger; her publisher and his mother are among the characters, and there is a vivid description of the actress Rachel, whom Charlotte had met in London. Her father urged that Heger and Lucy should marry and be happy, but Charlotte was inflexible. Her fame was now assured, and the £1,500 which she received for her book was to her a gold-mine. A life of more tranquillity seemed in store for her, but she was depressed by loneliness, and haunted by sad memories. In the year before her death she allowed herself to be persuaded to marry one of her father's curates who had long been deeply attached, and whose constancy touched her—and this union undoubtedly brought her a brief Indian summer of restful happiness. But it was ruthlessly cut short. Charlotte died at Haworth on March 31st, 1855; she was not quite thirty-nine years of age. Her literary achievement will always have an historical interest as marking a new phase of intensity and introspectiveness in English fiction.

ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL, daughter by his first marriage of William Stevenson, a clever, unsettled kind of man, tutor for some years at the Manchester Academy, Unitarian preacher, farmer, editor, Edinburgh Reviewer, Annual Registrar, and finally Keeper of the Treasury Records, was born in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, on September 29th, 1810. In 1837 she first saw herself in print, and in 1844, partly to distract her mind from the loss of an infant son, she began in earnest upon *Mary Barton*. The book was thus originally the solace of a mother's sorrow. Few books have had a more immediate success than had *Mary Barton* upon its anonymous appearance (October 14th, 1848), and the gratification of this was enhanced by the warm sympathy of the first novelist and the first critic of the day, Dickens and Carlyle.

When Dickens was projecting *Household Words* in 1850, he asked her to contribute, and the result was the story of *Lizzie Leigh*, followed by that inimitable series of pictures of middle-class society in a little country town—collected in June, 1853, under the title of *Cranford*. There is very little plot here, no serious purpose, and none of the melodramatic shadow which has contributed in some measure to the general effect both of *Mary Barton*, a story of misery and "clemming" among the Lancashire operatives during a great strike, and of *Ruth*, her second long narrative, a rueful tale of seduction (1853); but the *milieu* of *Cranford* exactly suited the peculiar faculty of Mrs. Gaskell.

The intensely shy and finch-like little figure of Charlotte Brontë had become familiar to Mrs. Gaskell from 1850, when the two authoresses met at the Shuttleworths', in the English lakes. Less than three months after Charlotte's death, on June 16th, 1855, Patrick Brontë (the father) wrote and asked Mrs. Gaskell to undertake an authorised biography of her friend. The task was performed with the most assiduous care and thoroughness, and the result was a specimen of pure biography which will perhaps survive to rank with Southey's *Nelson* and Lockhart's *Burns*. Her next serious attempt in fiction was deferred until 1863, an interval of six years; this was *Sylvia's Lovers*, an "auld Robin Gray" type of story, thrown into a Whitby whale-fishing setting, and most admirably done, showing an enhanced ripeness of humour and maturity of style. And these qualities are even more manifest in her last, unfinished novel of *Wives and Daughters*, which contains her two subtlest delineations of femininity in the characters of Clare and Cynthia. It appeared in *Cornhill* during 1864-5, and when she was preparing the last instalment, the authoress was suddenly stricken down by a heart attack, and died on November 12th, 1865, at Holybourne (the Helstone of *North and South*) near Alton.

CHAPTER VIII

NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORIANS

"Within the last fifty years History has been simultaneously lengthening (Egypt), widening (Japan), and deepening (Origins). We need more comprehensive plans, more able historians, the inclusion of sociology, the study of the secret movements of society. The nineteenth century has witnessed the self-recognition of History; the twentieth, without a doubt, is to witness its development and reorganisation as a study—second only in dignity and honour to the study of Poetry itself."

Froude—Buckle—Lecky—Sir H. S. Maine—Sir J. R. Seeley—Bishop Stubbs—Freeman—J. R. Green—
S. R. Gardiner—Lord Acton.

SINCE Macaulay, no historian has re-peopled the silent past with such innate power as James Anthony Froude. Born in Devonshire in 1818, under the shadow of a parish church and parsonage, thoughtful and passionate, but sombre and self-contained, he got profoundly excited over the Catholic Renaissance at Oxford, and the currents of opinion which produced the "Credo in Newmannum" of 1840—his state of mind during the period is reproduced in his two early volumes, *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847) and *The Nemesis of Faith* (1849); but after a sharp struggle he shook off his Romish tendency and his Catholic ideas, and turned to history to justify his position. "Oh, how I wish I could write." He became one of the greatest, though most careless, masters of English prose. The same craving after an autocrat that had hypnotised Carlyle into his panegyrics on Frederick and Cromwell made Froude a votary of a still stranger idol in Henry VIII.—the "majestic lord (of 'blood and grease') who broke the bonds of Rome." Incidentally it became the object of his life to counter the Counter-Reformation—to expose sacerdotalism and to denounce "the Papa, or Pope of Rome," with a fervour unsurpassed even by George Borrow. He derided the notion of History as a science, and treated it rather as material for allegory, in which he took the best care possible that the sacerdotal dogs should not get the best of it. The sermon to him was ever more important than the text. The drama is the thing in his eyes, and his last volume, *History of England* (from fall of Wolsey to

1588, twelve vols., 1856-70), with the execution of Mary and defeat of the Armada, makes a fifth act with a catastrophe, artistically at least, completely satisfactory. The attacks made on him by Freeman (who regarded himself as an instrument in the hands of Providence for Froude's chastisement) and others for mistakes in elementary points of fact were not only in the main unfair, pedantic, and incompetent, but essentially absurd.

Similarly beside the mark, to prove increasingly unintelligible in the lapse of time, are the attacks on his other books, his memorable *Short Studies, Oceana* and *Erasmus* (a fine work of interpretation most unjustly cavilled at by Dryasdust), above all, his masterly biography of the man he knew and understood best, Thomas Carlyle. The future can allow for inaccuracy or bias—it may even find a place for stupidity and prejudice if sufficiently extravagant: what it cannot tolerate is mediocrity of talent and the pretended omniscience of ephemeral "professors." That men in the future will read Froude for the attraction of his sinewy and masculine style is almost certain; whether they will sympathise with the despotic remedies he prescribed for humanity is another question. Temporarily the fact that he uttered no *Apologia* has made against Froude's reputation. But he always held aloof resolutely from "authorism" of any kind. He despised writers who "bark back," and he vouchsafed never a reply to his maddened assailants. In revenge they spread the reports of his work which crystallised in "Froudacity," the "maladie de Froude," and the usual jokes about his

Hic jacet. In 1892, by one of the ironical turns of Time's whirligig, Froude succeeded his old tormentor as Regius Professor of History at Oxford, and nowhere was the appointment so loudly applauded as in *The Saturday Review*, which had contained all the bitterest of Freeman's attacks. A colossus among the small fry of University fellows and tutors, Froude fulfilled his duties with dignity and applause. His vacations were spent in his Devonian retreat at Kingsbridge, and there he died on October 20th, 1894.

Henry Thomas Buckle (1821—1862), the son of a wealthy shipowner, was born at Lee, in Kent, on November 24th, 1821. At seventeen he seemed to be outgrowing a congenital delicacy and was placed in his father's office, from the hated routine of which his father's death in 1840 released him. He spent the next year in foreign travel with his mother, to whom his devotion increased in intensity. His travels developed him from a Low Church Tory into a Radical Freethinker. A meeting with the Hallams aided in fixing his ambition to be an historian. During 1842-3 he was steadily buying and reading a miscellaneous historical library.

Back in London, he lived and worked in his library of nearly 20,000 volumes quite unknown to the literary world, "an eccentric outsider, bursting with ambition and curious erudition in eighteen languages. His idea was to eclipse Macaulay, and he varied research by the most elaborate exercises in literary style. The main lines of the "book" had been laid down by 1853, if not a good deal before, but Buckle, more and more fastidious, felt obliged to go over it, purging and rewriting again and again. His memory was almost as retentive and as accurate as that of Macaulay, and was often displayed in action with the same "overpowering" effect. During the whole of 1855 he was copying the *magnum opus* for press and incorporating new notes. No publisher could be got to take a sufficiently responsible view of his obligations in bringing out such a book, so Buckle determined to issue it himself. The book finally came out in September, 1857, and achieved an almost instantaneous success. Its "intellectual splendour" made it the talk of London, and eventually of Europe. The rolling vigour of Buckle's style, the pomp of his generalisation, and the high confidence with which he stepped along, driving whole ages and nations before him

in flocks, and like some great general disposing of his vast miscellany of fact and inference with consummate ease—this dazzled the reading world, and left few, even among the reflective, to echo the ferocious verdict of the Sage of Chelsea, "Long-winded, conceited blockhead, full of barren, empty formulas about the progress of the species, progress of this, progress of that, progress of science!"

William Edward Hartpole Lecky was born at Newton Park, near Dublin, on March 26th, 1838, the descendant of an old landed family in Ireland. At the early age of twenty-seven he brought out his first book, on *The Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, an astonishing work, no less for its daring manipulation of Buckle's views and methods, than for its wide research, and for the maturity and sobriety of thought which it displays. The writer's tendency to a somewhat pompous and inconclusive balancing of contrary opinions is also manifest, and provoked a rather stinging review from George Eliot, in which Lecky is specially accused of vagueness. In this book, and in his *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869), Lecky exhibits tastes, opinions and methods of expression all completely formed. His peculiar style and mode of thought as a writer found its best expression in his *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (8 vols., 1878-90). In this great History he has nothing to say of Blenheim or Culloden, but dwells at great length, and in a very impartial way, upon the rise of Methodism, social changes under the Georges, and the American War. In Vol. II. he commenced a tableau of society in Ireland which is almost worthy to rank with Macaulay's third chapter. The space devoted to Ireland becomes more and more disproportionate until it finally occupies the whole canvas. The parasite conquered the plant to which it clung. The title had all along been a misnomer; eventually recourse was had to a surgical operation, the Irish portion was more or less skilfully disengaged and published separately as *A History of Ireland during the Eighteenth Century* (5 vols., 1892). His later books were *Democracy and Liberty* (1896), a survey of contemporary political methods which, if not pessimistic, is at least deeply imbued with mistrust of Demos, and a keen sense of the danger of political and journalistic appeals to popular passion, ignorance, and prejudice.

Some pungent criticism of political "promises" drew a repartee from Gladstone in the *Nineteenth Century* review. His *Map of Life* (1900) on moral problems of every-day occurrence and his *Poems* (1891) are both extremely pleasing and well-written exercises in the elaboration of the purely commonplace. Lecky, who married the daughter of a Dutch general, was nominated to the new Order of Merit in 1902 and received many other honours.

One of the severest critics of what he regarded as the loose generalisations of Buckle was Sir Henry Sumner Maine (1822—1888), who was himself one of the clearest thinkers in the new sphere of sociology. Of Scottish descent, he graduated in journalism on the newly founded *Saturday Review* (1855), produced an epoch-making book on *Ancient Law*, and was adopted into the Indian official hierarchy as a legal member of the Council in India, and afterwards sat upon the Indian Council at home, eventually becoming Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and Professor of International Law.

The son of a publisher, L. B. Seeley, who wrote, among many religious essays, a book of merit on Edward I., Sir John Robert Seeley (1834—1895) conceived history exclusively as a training ground for the man of affairs by means of a series of exercises in the history (*i.e.* the politics) of the past of such a kind as to aid him in shaping the politics of the present, that is, the history of the future. "History the school of statesmanship" was his watchword. In his book called *The Expansion of England* (1883) he exhibited a practical application of his ideas. Seeley was perhaps the first historian to "think imperially" in the modern sense. The Cambridge School as represented by Seeley, especially in this book, thus co-operated in a striking manner with the new trend which Disraeli had given to English polity in 1878. *The Expansion of England* served above all to give precision to ideas already in the air—an appearance of scientific and historical corroboration to a vague theory or aspiration, which the journalists as soon as ever they tasted pronounced very good.

The most characteristic representatives of the Oxford school are Stubbs, Freeman, Green, and Gardiner, forming a most remarkable constellation of interdependent historical talent. Mandell Creighton, the versatile Churchman, courtier, and man of the world, who ended

his career as Bishop of London (January 14th, 1901), occupies a position somewhat aloof from this group, more catholic and cosmopolitan, less insular, better equipped for enduring the buffets of Time. The fine temper of his historical sense is shown in his *History of the Papacy during the Reformation* (1882-94), left in mid-career, a torso which is almost Thucydidean in its concentrated pith, its sharply cut portraits, and its severe agnostic reserve.

William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford (d. April 22nd, 1901), the son of a Knaresborough attorney, was born on June 21st, 1825, and was educated at Ripon and at Christ Church, Oxford, where he entered as a servitor in 1844. "Stobæus," as the pompous Dean Gaisford called him, became a sub-librarian at the college, got a first, and a fellowship at Trinity, and soon became well known for his churchmanship and for the learning which he was to make illustrious. He was Professor of History at Oxford 1866-84.

Like Freeman and Green, Stubbs undoubtedly overstressed the predominance of the Saxon or Germanic element in English history and English institutions. His *Constitutional History of England*, which first appeared in 1873-8, far outstripped anything else on the subject, and was for many years a semi-sacred book at Oxford. But the ground had not really been sufficiently prepared by the antiquarians for his earlier studies. He was not fully aware of the treachery of the ground that he traversed.

Edward Augustus, youngest child of John and Mary Anne Freeman, was born at Mitchley Abbey, Staffordshire, on August 2nd, 1823. In 1860 he settled at Somerleaze, a house with a small park near Wells, in Somerset. There, with a fine collection of books about him, he began on the series of historical works (he had previously written nothing but reviews for *The Saturday* and some architectural studies) which made his reputation, notably his *History of Federal Government*, his *Old English History*, *Historical Geography*, and his *History of the Norman Conquest* (1865-9), too lengthy and tautological, but full of vigour and enthusiastic historical erudition. The reputation which his books had gradually won for him led to his appointment to succeed Stubbs in 1884 as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, where, though his lectures were unattended, his fitness to "inculcate the rude manners of our Saxon forefathers" was

unquestioned. Henceforth he produced some interesting *Essays* and *Lectures*, and three and a half volumes of a *History of Sicily* (1891-4) upon a large scale. He died at Alicante on May 16th, 1892. His most representative work was his *Norman Conquest* and its sequel, *William Rufus*. The subordination of the Saxon to the Norman-French factor in English history was to him an anomalous fact which rankled in his imagination.

Born of an old Oxford family, his father and grandfather both robe-makers and parish clerks, John Richard Green was born in St. John Street, Oxford, in 1837, and in 1854 gained a scholarship at Jesus from Magdalen College School. From Oxford he plunged into an East-end London parish, and for years was well-nigh totally immersed in Broad Church philanthropy, earning a little extra money, however, by journalism. In 1865 Green obtained an incumbency, with a small stipend, but one which, together with his journalistic earnings, enabled him to travel—his voyagings with Freeman were a great encouragement to him, and heartened him for the task of national historian, for which he had always been preparing in the back of his brain. A few years later he gave up his work at Stepney, his health necessitating his sojourning abroad. He now abandoned his idea of a book on England and the Great Charter, and concentrated upon "Little Book," as he called it—a book which made an epoch by its appearance in 1874 as *A Short History of the English People*. A vivid and earnest presentment of

English history, conceived in a pictorial spirit and making almost a religion of the progress of the Angle-kin or the English folk, as Freeman loved to call it, this was a book the national tone and spirit of which took England by storm. But its freshness of presentation is purchased at too high a price. There is a note more of a tribal pæan than an historical narrative pervading the whole book—blurring the lines, sacrificing definition to strong lights and vivid colours.

No historian has ever cross-fertilised the pamphlet literature and other documentary evidence of an epoch to such good purpose as Samuel Rawson Gardiner (d. February 23rd, 1902) in his monumental *History of England, 1603-48*, followed by his *History of the Civil War* and *History of the Protectorate, 1649-56* (17 vols. in all). As Lord Acton said, with his plenary knowledge Gardiner has done the work in such wise that "we are content, and could never wish it to be done over again." From the too frequent accompaniment of content, satiety, Gardiner's *History* is not wholly free. He lacked that higher imaginative power which is closely allied to the mythopœic faculty—a dangerous possession, it may be, to the historian, but one without which a great history cannot breathe freely as a work of art. The possession of this in connection with his grand style will make Froude live as an historian, while its absence, and that of its concomitant prose power, will relegate the much more accurate and painstaking Gardiner to the twilight of standard books of reference.

As an accumulator of historical information—he can hardly be called an historian, for he wrote no history—Lord Acton was probably without a rival since 1859; he resembled several contemporaries and begetters of legends who wrote nothing quite commensurate with their reputation for enormous learning, notably Benjamin Jowett, Mark Pattison, and F. York Powell. Born in South Italy on January 10th, 1834, John Dalberg Acton was the son of an English baronet by a German countess. A great traveller and linguist, he spent half his life on the continent, and more than half of his waking hours in reading. From 1859 to 1872, the golden age of book-reviewing, he did valuable work in this department, for a time as editor of *The Rambler* (1859-62) and of *The Home and Foreign Review* (1862-4), both periodicals chiefly known through Newman, and afterwards as contributor to the weekly *Chronicle*, *The North British Review*, *The English Historical*, *Edinburgh*, and *Quarterly*. Beyond these reviews he has left merely some acute and learned letters (*Letters to Mary Gladstone*, 1904; *Lord Acton and his Circle*, 1906), and a few *Lectures* (1906). Unlike Freeman, who took universal history as his province, Acton took Modern History only, from 1500. Keen, lucid, and diplomatic in his talk, as soon as he put pen to paper Acton becomes expostulatory, allusive, and obscure. His epigrams are generally enigmas, the meaning of which is further obscured by a footnote. He was certainly overweighted with learning, and his liberal Romanism, his cosmopolitan politics, his idolatry of Gladstone as a writer, his fanatical enthusiasm for George Eliot, his affluence of inedited anecdotes, plunge him further and further into paradox. To be intelligible is to be found out, might have been his motto. But like his grandfather, the Minister at Naples in Nelson's time, he remains a puzzle. He accepted the Chair at Cambridge which Macaulay had pushed aside, and died, the most popular professor of his day, in June, 1902.

CHAPTER IX

THE *ÆSTHETIC* MOVEMENT IN VERSE AND PROSE

"Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wings against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay
Lull'd by the singer of an idle day."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

D. G. Rossetti—The P.R.B.—John Ruskin—William Morris—The new Social Creed—Christina Rossetti—
J. A. Symonds—P. G. Hamerton—F. T. Palgrave.

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI was the eldest of the four children of the Italian patriot and Dante symbolist, Gabriele Rossetti, who settled in London in 1825, and married Frances, daughter of Dr. Polidori—the medical attendant upon whom Byron vented a good deal of contemptuous satire during his sojourn on the Lake of Geneva in 1822. Born in Charlotte Street on May 12th, 1828, Rossetti was sent to King's College School, where he showed remarkable precocity in verse, but was attracted by youthful ambition to become a painter, and was accordingly admitted to Cary's Art Academy about 1843. Neither there nor at the Academy School was his progress especially remarkable; he never mastered the mysteries of freehand and perspective. He was already, nevertheless, a master of pictorial as well as of poetic motive, and had written *The Blessed Damsel*, when, in 1848, he applied to Ford Madox Brown for instruction in painting. Through Madox Brown he came under the influence of Ruskin's ideas, and got to know some of the most original and talented painters among the younger men. As a draughtsman he was one of the least of these, but as a colourist, both on canvas and in speech, he had many original theories and a mystical poetic (which he revealed to his choicest intimates) of his own. Rossetti soon obtained a dominant influence among this coterie. This influence could only be felt to its full extent by an artistic coterie. Rossetti had

the great advantage in addressing them that he was an artist by profession. Like Blake, Ruskin, Morris, and to some extent like Pugin and later Freeman, Rossetti gained enormously by his rare gift of alternation between two Arts, and these the most sublime, Poetry and Painting. And he early acquired the power of illumining the one by the light of experience gained in the proper dominions of the other.

The seminal influence of pre-Raphaelitism was brought about by a contact between the revolt from the smooth conventional technique and composition (with monticles, broken columns and brown trees in regular perspective) which obtained the nickname of Raphaelesque and the profound enthusiasm for Keats, which the mercurial Rossetti imposed upon all his circle as the price of his friendship. His proselytising power and the inexhaustible personal magnetism of the man at this period enabled him to set all his associates to work to draw the coverts which he pointed, and to disdain the authority of the Academy. In the autumn of 1848 at Rossetti's studio in Newman Street seven of this group banded themselves together as the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

We can imagine the delight that Rossetti's ardent and sanguine young temperament must have felt in organising his revolt against the accepted critical canons of the art world of that day, and the P.R.B. (as they signed themselves) must have been superhuman had they also not experienced a certain grim delight in out-

raging the corrupt Corinthian taste, the subdued tones, conventional gestures and generalised types of expression and colouring which were then predominant. Everything in their work was the opposite of this—bright colours, minute details microscopically drawn from life, strange gestures, individual expression, as esoteric and symbolic as opposed to the tame and generalised treatment of historic and mediæval subjects which was then in vogue. A paper was started to embody the propaganda of the new brotherhood. It was called *The Germ* and ran to but four numbers, Rossetti's contributions far outweighing those of his associates in importance. The brotherhood achieved some remarkable work in painting, but gradually diverged in aim and fell asunder.

Of his marriage with the beautiful model, Lizzie Siddal, whom his comrade Deverel had first espied in a bonnet-shop, and whom Millais painted as Ophelia, of her rapid progress as an artist and tragic death in 1862, of Rossetti's passionate decision to bury his poems (already much circulated among his private friends) with her dead body, and of the unpleasant necessity to which he was reduced of disinterring the said poems in 1869 for publication in the ensuing year, enough and more than enough has been written. What is equally clear is that, after the death of his wife in 1862, Rossetti's hegemony proved too exacting for any of his old friends and followers. His temper grew morose, querulous, and uncertain. His habits became more and more shrouded and nocturnal. The insomnia which he had so long tempted became habitual and led to his drugging himself without regard to consequences. But he was cheered even during the darkest moments of this disordered dream of genius by some bright, genial and critical periods, and by the devoted tenderness of one or two friends who succeeded at length in breaking him of the chloral habit and humouring him into a state in which he composed a few of his finest ballads and sonnets. These were published in a second volume of poems, named *Ballads and Sonnets*, in 1881, which was received with great respect by the comparatively small circle of cognoscenti: at the same time the 1870 volume of *Poems* was reissued with some omissions and interpolations. A short period of almost unnatural cheerfulness now ensued, but his health was radically undermined. A touch of paralysis

affected him towards the close of 1881. He was taken to Birchington-on-Sea near Margate, and died there on April 9th, 1882.

The mysterious clutch which Rossetti has over the emotions when he is dealing with the uncanny, the wonderful palette which he has at the disposal of his wild and desolate ballads, are seen at their best in such pieces as *The King's Tragedy* (written 1881, relating through the mouth of Catherine Douglas, known as Kate Barlas, the assassination of James I. by Sir Robert Graeme), *The White Ship* (1880), *Sister Helen* (1852, the calm, inexorable revenge of a betrayed and deserted girl who burns a waxen image to blight her false lover by witchcraft) and *Rose Mary* (1870, another weird ballad of sin detected by second sight), in which the poet recaptures much of the very witchery of *Christabel*.

It is a strange and significant fact that the middle of the nineteenth century should have conducted the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and John Ruskin by quite distinct though converging routes to two contiguous promontories in the domain of Art and to a common admiration of the primitive masters who preceded the great Florentines of the fifteenth century. The paths of approach to this common ground were in the main quite distinct. The P.R.B. sought primarily to fulfil the literary legacy of Keats; they revered the primitive Tuscans, partly because of their mediæval quaintness, partly because they discerned in them a desire to counterfeit nature by minute observation, a desire which they shared while revolting against the prevalent conventions and smugness of such colourists as Grant, Eastlake, Ary Scheffer and the contemporary school. Ruskin's method of approach, on the other hand, was through adoration for Turner, a passion for making direct memoranda from nature in the open air, and a fresh study of the early Italian masters. They shared a common love for a simplicity of aim upon which no corrupting influences had yet had time to work. Directly the brotherhood drew little inspiration from Ruskin (whose profounder aspirations were not theirs), though they certainly owed much to his championship of their eccentricities at a critical point in their career.

The only child of a prosperous wine-merchant, John Ruskin was born on February 8th, 1819, at 54, Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, then comparatively open towards the north. In his

early youth, however, his parents moved to Herne Hill, where tutors were engaged for him, as for one too delicate for the rough and tumble of Harrow or Rugby. Growing older, he travelled far and wide with his parents in a post-chaise over the length and breadth of England and Scotland, and, later on, on the Continent. In 1836 he became a gentleman commoner at Christ Church, Oxford, already fancying himself something of poet, savant, and genius, though his education had been of the most desultory—the best part of it consisting of readings by his father in the English classics, Scott and Cervantes, and by his mother (who was of a somewhat stern and Puritan nature) in the Bible. His one exploit at Oxford was to win the Newdigate Prize Poem (1839). He had already written a paper on *The Poetry of Architecture* for *Loudon's Magazine* in 1838, and in 1841 an essay in exposition of Turner, whose work in water-colour and sepia he endeavoured to emulate, directed his attention more and more to the distinguishing merits of this master—hence the theme of his first volume of *Modern Painters* in 1843. A second volume in 1846 greatly increased his reputation, and established a position for Ruskin both as a stylist and as an apostle of beauty. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* with Ruskin's own drawings more than confirmed his reputation in 1849. His glorification of the pageant of the sky, of the steel framework of the earth in the Alps, and of the employment of external surfaces in architecture will always live among the most animated and inspiring passages of English prose.

In 1851 Ruskin came forward to champion two of the pre-Raphaelites (Hunt and Millais) from the ignorance and insolence of the Press attacks upon their work; but he was only half a convert to the technique of the brotherhood, though he was prepared to carry many of their half-abandoned ideas to all lengths. Nearly all his art theories, indeed (many of them strangely inconsistent), came to be regarded by him eventually as vehicles for the conveyance of ethical theory. After intense study in Italy, in the course of which he produced a vast number of exquisite drawings, sketches, and pictorial memoranda, Ruskin produced the two quarto volumes of *The Stones of Venice* in 1851 and 1853.

Extravagant as the thesis often is in its denunciation of the Renaissance and its works,

it is, on the whole, a magnificent testimonial of the beauty and sincerity of mediæval workmanship, embodying with other features a concrete expansion of the idea in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that the buildings and art of a people are the expression of their religion, their morality, their aspirations and social habits. Among a number of minor works, including manuals and lectures, his great æsthetic manifesto in *Modern Painters* was brought to a close with its fifth volume in 1860. It embodies the development of Ruskin's thought from his seventeenth to his forty-first year. But a new era in his life was now commencing.

Ruskin came under the influence of the fiery propagandism of Carlyle, whom he henceforth looked up to as his "master." Carlyle applauded his veracity, and spurred him on to the conflict with social shams. The result of this new direction of thought and energy was embodied in a series of more or less detached homilies in *Unto this Last* (1860), *Munere Pulveris, Time and Tide* (1867). Ruskin's *sans gêne* in dealing with vested interests and class prejudices caused so much consternation by their novelty in the early 'sixties that Thackeray had to eject his contributions from *The Cornhill Magazine*.

The organ of the Ruskinian propaganda and the receptacle of all his discontents and divagations during his active crusading period, was a monthly letter (priced at 10d.), addressed to the workmen of England, to which he gave the baffling name of *Fors Clavigera*. But the incessant labours of his long ministry were drawing to an end when, in 1884, he resigned his Slade professorship and withdrew to Brantwood, a house in a beautiful position overlooking Coniston Lake, which he had bought and embellished between 1871 (when his mother died) and 1874, and where he lived henceforth upon the proceeds of his books, for he had spent all his patrimony upon others. Fortunately his literary income was ample to support him, with a large margin for almsgiving. Even now he was occupied intermittently in articles and in autobiographical papers of the utmost naïveté and charm, not without a certain specific egotism appropriate to the genre to which he gave the name of *Præterita*.

During the last ten years of his life his mind was often clouded, his brain seemed benumbed, and the conversation, which was held by those who heard it to surpass in beauty even the

periods of his cadenced prose, was seldom or never heard. He died peacefully among his Turners at Brantwood on January 20th, 1900, and was buried in Coniston Churchyard (sepulchre in the Abbey having been declined). So passed away one of the greatest of England's irregular men of genius. The beauty of his prose style, its quality of measure, the power which it exerts over the emotions—these things have seldom been surpassed.

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834—1896), the son of well-to-do-parents, of Worcestershire origin (his father was partner in a firm of bill brokers), was born at Walthamstow. He was brought up within range of Epping Forest, save for three years at Marlborough, and at eighteen entered Exeter College, Oxford. His tastes, already strongly romantic, "Gothic," and antiquarian, were confirmed by intercourse at Exeter with Burne-Jones, the painter, and his set. He was influenced also in turn by the Oxford Movement, by Ruskin and Maurice, and then more potently by Rossetti and Swinburne. Meanwhile, in 1856, he entered the office of G. E. Street, the eminent Gothic revivalist in architecture. In 1859 he married the beautiful Jane Burden, who had sat as a model for him at Oxford, and whose striking face, appears in so many of Rossetti's finest works. Before this, in March, 1858, he published his *Defence of Guinevere*, and *Other Poems*, which he dedicated to Rossetti—an extraordinarily melodious medley of mediæval suggestions and experiments in a variety of styles. *Sir Peter Harpdon's End*, a dramatic sketch of siege warfare in Poitou under Henry VI., is one of the most vivid and direct things Morris ever wrote. He was already much addicted to Botticellism. After his marriage Morris abandoned poetry and painting for a time, and was occupied with a scheme for the design and manufacture of really artistic decorations for household purposes—chintzes, wall-papers, glass and metal work, carpets, painted windows, tiles, damasks, tapestries, and the like. A company was formed, a propaganda was set on foot, which was much helped by the Exhibition of 1862, and progress was fairly rapid towards the pre-Raphaelitising of the English interior. Between 1866 and 1870 Morris resumed literary work, and poured forth in one long series *The Life and Death of Jason* and the analogous legendary narratives which fitted together in a flowered design of the most harmonious beauty and delectable contrivance to form the 50,000 lines of *The Earthly Paradise* (1867-76). This, in some sense following Chaucer and Boccaccio, is a thesaurus of some twenty-four legends and folk-tales, two for each month, half smacking of the North Sea, and half of the Mediterranean. In decorative and narrative skill they certainly approach Chaucer, but in personal and human interest, in variety, and, above all, in humour, they are wholly deficient. The language is a most pure Saxon, the metre harmonious, smooth, and flawless even to monotony (though a variety of metres—rhyming pentameters, octosyllabic, Chaucerian stanzas, etc.—are essayed); the descriptions are of singular felicity, rich and sweet, yet not lacking in vigour. A restful, unimpassioned, somewhat fatalistic and pagan charm, as of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, is over the whole. Yet there seems to be something lacking. It seems to be a feast of beauty without soul—deficient in the haze and shadow of mystery and the higher imagination.

In 1875 the decorating business which Morris had initiated was reconstructed, and he became sole manager of the concern. Two years later his Icelandic studies produced the epic of *Sigurd the Volsung*. He was now drawn away from his old pre-Raphaelite associates into a more Ruskinian zone. For a time he attempted to lead the Socialist party in London. Whither he intended to lead them it would be difficult to say, probably to "Nowhere," his favourite Utopia in the clouds. At any rate Morris jibbed at anarchism and returned from quasi-political life about 1889 to follow up his Utopian *Dream of John Ball* (a fantastic prose-picture in a strictly Teutonic English of a regenerated society) by two highly original, elaborate, and polychromatic prose romances, *The House of the Wulfunge* and *The Story of the Glittering Plain*; also to set up on Hammersmith Mall his celebrated Kelmscott Press, whence issued the Kelmscott Chaucer and other noble examples of typography. In 1895 Morris's health began to decline, and a voyage which he took to the Arctic Circle wearied rather than revived him. He returned to London to sink and die on October 3rd, 1896.

A bond may be found between Morris and Rossetti in a discipleship, for a brief space at any rate, to the leading ideas of Ruskin, and a common enthusiasm for Keats and mediæval antiquities. Rossetti, however, was the real initiator in the neo-mediæval movement. Morris diffused the new doctrine, and traced out applications of it in applied art, handicrafts, language, and politics. The palpable ugliness and unfairness and the hidden iniquities of modern life created in him a yearning to retrace "the path of progress" as the optimists conceived it; to go back before Protestantism, commercialism, mill-hands and machine-made commodities, and try to build up society anew upon a somewhat cleaner, more equitable, and more beautiful foundation. Much of this was in harmony with Ruskin's ideas. Much of Morris's best literature, however, is as much coterie decoration as his chintzes, his windows, his printed books, his tiles, and his textiles. The pulsations of work-a-day human life are as rigidly excluded from it as are animal forms from the arabesque. It has just about as much of the stress and passion and life, no more and no less, than the most cunningly devised and woven tapestry. One is delighted to know that such a beautiful and costly fabric can be made and to see it now and again. One acquiesces also without any very keen regret in the obvious reflection that such a luxurious product must necessarily be restricted to the use of the leisured and excessive rich. By a fine irony, then, it seems that the one indisputable effect of all these converging revolutionary currents, æsthetic and socialistic, is to tickle the palate of the decidedly rich, to



Photo Barraud.

John Ruskin

whet the rage and hunger of curio-hunters of all kinds, and, in competition with the new art products of Nippon, to give a new inspiration and fresh impetus to the design departments of the leading decorators, upholsterers, and cabinet-makers in the United Kingdom.

Of the verse that sought to reflect the hark-back of Rossetti and his circle, with a combination of Morris's own purity of diction, there is nothing to equal the lyrics of *Goblin Market*, Christina Rossetti's chief bid to fame, produced early in 1862, when she was thirty-one and her famous brother two years older. Unlike most of our modern poetesses, such as Mrs. Browning and Jean Ingelow, Christina excelled not in the ballad, but in the song. Like other poets of her sex she lacked creative power, but her character was so interesting, her religion so sincere, and her feeling so intense, that few of her lyrics lack some redeeming touch of the imaginative faculty. She died in London the victim of a long-torturing malady in 1894.

Of the lesser disciples of the æsthetic gospel in prose two brilliant essayists seem likely to remain pre-eminent. John Addington Symonds (b. Bristol, October, 1840; d. Rome, April, 1893) is a typical product of our classical hothouse system, ending in a fellowship from Balliol. Self-confessed "an ugly duckling" at Harrow, Symonds was at any rate a very precocious one. At nineteen he was already accused of being worn out with premature culture. The sphinx-like influence of Jowett spurred him on to the highest honours: yet he complained, not quite fairly, that he was left a mere amateur, with no grasp of serious business. Unlike Swinburne, Burne-Jones, or Morris, he had no positive determination to creative art. Also he had leisured means. Meanwhile he coruscated as a letter-writer, lectured or wrote æsthetically on Dante, Greek poetry, or Elizabethan drama, wrote an essay-history of the Italian Renaissance, and excelled in magazine sketches and travel descriptions. In every literary figure he was elegantly accomplished and fluent, but he was an incorrigibly florid writer, never quite satisfied with the natural hues, always "laying it on thick" and painting his sunsets the colour of blended liqueurs. He will survive, though, as the incomparable translator of Cellini, Gozzi, M. Angelo, and Campanella; while his curious, almost morbidly introspective personality is revealed in an interesting autobiography worked up with admirable skill by his friend and correspondent, Horatio F. Brown.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton was born near Oldham in the heart of the grey cotton country on September 10th, 1834. His childhood was exceptionally lonely and miserable, for his mother died when he was an infant, and he was brutally treated by a drunken and dissolute father. The father dead, he was sent to a large public school, where his morbid sensitiveness and lack of strength precluded healthy, normal development. Then came a brief and unpleasant career as a soldier—a career for which he was wholly unfitted—and it was not until after 1854 that he found his career as an art critic, shading off into an essayist and delineator of the pleasures of *The Intellectual Life* (1873), which had a greater success at first in America. He attempted two romances, *Wenderholme* (1869) and *Marmorne* (1878), which are strong in tonality with some of the quiet quality of Fromentin. He excelled in his essays and those charming books defending everyday French manners against English misconstruction, *French and English* (1889), *Round my House* (he lived at Autun), and *Modern Frenchmen*. His writing is diffuse, a little deficient in central heat or intensity, but it is finely balanced, suggestive, indefinably graceful, and insensibly convincing by reason of its very restraint. Many of its qualities are reproduced in Lecky's *Map of Life* and by many imitative works since. Hamerton died in 1894, leaving a fragment of *Autobiography* to be completed in a *Memoir* by one who was much too good a wife to be a very good critic.

Much of the best poetical criticism of the Victorian era has been expressed in the form of anthologies of the English poets. And prince of our English anthologists by general consent is Francis Turner Palgrave (1824—1897), the son of the historian of *England and Normandy* and brother of W. Gifford Palgrave, the famous Arabian traveller. From Charterhouse and Balliol, where he was a prophet of Tennyson in the early 'forties, he obtained a fellowship and a snug official post, which enabled him to develop into a semi-professional taster, connoisseur, and appraiser. Scott, Wordsworth, and Tennyson were his favourite idolatries. He first met Tennyson in 1849, and henceforth was a frequent Christmas visitor at Farringford and a fellow traveller with Tennyson on more than one expedition. On the rock-bound coast of Cornwall Palgrave was commissioned by Mrs. Tennyson not to let the short-sighted bard out of his sight, and the "old gentleman," as Tennyson was playfully entitled (it being high treason to call him by his name lest publicity should ensue), grew as restive and querulous as a child under the persecution of his youthful mentor. But for all their incessant bickering Palgrave stuck to him nobly, and it was during this period that the plan of *The Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* (1861) was submitted to the great laureate, and the inclusion of almost every item canvassed and debated, often with considerable warmth. The result was a Selection of Shorter English Poems, not only the most successful in winning the suffrages of Englishmen of every school, but also intensely interesting as representative of the most catholic taste of a period. England has ever since been prolific in anthologies, many of them of considerable excellence, and a few worthy of comparison with the choicer Elizabethan song-books, such as *England's Helicon*. We can mention as among the most noteworthy those of Allingham (*Nightingale Valley*), Amelia B. Edwards, Henley, Quiller-Couch (*The Oxford Book of Verse*), Bullen, W. J. Linton, Arber, Ward, A. H. Miles, Mowbray Morris, Beeching, M. A. Woods, R. Ingpen, Mrs. Meynell, and E. V. Lucas (*The Open Road* and *The Friendly Town*).

CHAPTER X

SECONDARY VICTORIAN NOVELISTS: THE KINGSLEYS, CHARLES READE, AND ANTHONY TROLLOPE

I

"He knows God's will, and it always harmonises strangely with Mr. Kingsley's objects and opinions. He speaks of Him and to Him with the simple directness, the confiding but not disrespectful familiarity now of Moses and now of Uncle Tom. When he issues his commands to the world of sinners, it is as if he had just come from an interview with the Most High on Sinai. When he prays, it is (to use Mrs. Stowe's language) as though he knew God were listening behind the curtain. He is unpleasantly fond of introducing the Great Name on all occasions: it is always 'God's work,' 'God's feats,' 'God's heroes,' 'God's bells,' 'Good news of God'; expressions which, just and fitting enough when sparingly, solemnly, and appropriately used, produce almost a profane effect by their incessant and uncalled-for recurrence; appear to be dictated chiefly by an appetite for strong language operating on a gentleman in orders; and are in fact, we believe, Mr. Kingsley's way of swearing."—W. R. GREG, *Literary and Social Judgments*.

"Our recent novel literature seems to me to be our great glory in literature since Bulwer's reformation. They are nearly all respectable except Currer Bell and Kingsley."—LORD ACTON, 1861.

CHARLES KINGSLEY was born at Holne Vicarage, "on the brow of Dartmoor," on June 12th, 1819. A West countryman born and bred, he felt himself a stranger and a sojourner in a foreign land the moment he got east of Taunton Dean and the Mendips. Both his father and mother were exceptionally gifted persons: his mother highly imaginative, of West Indian seigneur descent, his father the descendant of an old gentle family impoverished by reckless extravagance. Charles was precocious, especially in regard to natural history and poetry. From Helston in Cornwall, where he was at school, he went to King's College, London, and then to Magdalene, Cambridge, where his popularity and versatility did not prevent his obtaining a first in classics after six months' real work. In 1842 he was ordained to the curacy of Eversley, the then forlorn Hampshire parish on the borders of

Windsor Forest, with which his name was to be associated. He was at this time an enthusiastic, if somewhat incoherent, disciple of F. D. Maurice, Carlyle, and Dr. Arnold. Later on he called himself a Platonist in philosophy, and had a taste for the mystics, liking to recognise a divine symbolism in nature, while at the same time his scientific enthusiasm (he was an excellent practical zoologist, geologist, and botanist) led him unreservedly to praise and to admire Darwin, Lyell, and especially Huxley, whom he came in later life singularly to resemble. He settled down into practical discipleship of Maurice, as Broad Churchman, Christian Socialist and Co-operator, and he remained steadfast, amidst all his energies and employments, as a kind of college tutor to the English working man.¹

Kingsley's three historical novels have surpassed his earlier and more intimately felt

¹ There was no lack of honest sincerity in the two books, by many thought to be his best, in which he preached his social doctrines: *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*. Like *Sybil* and Mark Rutherford's *Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, they represent the undersong of British industrial greatness, the bitter cry of the "hand" to be regarded as human. *Alton Locke*, the tailor-poet, is a well-sustained character, and Kingsley has crept into the very brain, so to speak, of an artisan, and has found a path scarcely ever trodden before in fiction to the view-point of the slum. Sandy Mackaye is life-like; his Scottish dialect evoked the amazement of Carlyle; but most of the other characters lack individuality, and the plot is even more deficient in plausibility. The sage spoke of a fervid creation still left half chaotic: "The book is definable as crude; by no manner of means the best we expect of you—if you will resolutely temper your fire. But to make the malt sweet, the fire should and must be slow!" Never spoke Chelsea with deeper insight or keener foresight.

novels in popularity. *Hypatia* appeared in 1853, *Westward Ho!* in 1855, and *Hereward the Wake* in 1866. The descriptive portion in all of them is first-rate, as it was in his later novel of *Two Years Ago*, and his record of the long-wished-for West Indian visit in *At Last*. The boyish ardour of his partisanship in *Westward Ho!* aids him in recovering some portion of the spirit of the great Elizabethan seamen and voyagers. In *Hypatia* Kingsley attempted a picture of the antique world at the period of its deliquescence, an era of seething and of decadence corresponding in some respects to the age of Louis XV. The task was beyond his strength, though the work contains some of the noblest, most suggestive, and most ideal writing that he ever accomplished. But *Westward Ho!* is a perfect boy's book, abounding in the most vivid narration and description. The Protestant heroes, it is true, are preternaturally heroic and chivalric, the Catholics are painted with all the darkest dye with which Protestant imagination has ever invested Pope and Inquisition. But, in spite of the same monotony of invective which mars the picturesque pages of Motley, the reader is swept forward by the verve of Kingsley, and one can return without any stint or abatement of admiration to those wonderful chapters on "The True and Tragical History of Mr. John Oxenham" and "The Capture of the Gold Train," and the dream of Amyas, or the episodes of the death of Paracombe and the loss of the *Santa Catherina*.

Westward Ho! greatly added to Kingsley's reputation. The odium against him was diminishing, and in 1860, on the death of Sir James Stephen (father of Sir Leslie) he was elected to the chair of Modern History at Cambridge. He was not specially fitted for an

academic chair, and his extraordinary versatility had begun to tell upon him. As it was, since *Westward Ho!* he had produced *The Heroes* (1856), an unrivalled collection for children of the best of the myths of Hellas, containing the stories of Perseus, the Argonauts and Theseus, and *The Water Babies* (1863), a little classic which, but for a few quite unreadable passages, had obtained for itself almost as many clients in the schoolroom as *Alice in Wonderland* itself. When he turned to write natural history for young readers in *Glaucois*; or, *The Wonders of the Sea-shore*, and *Madam How and Lady Why*, he captivates by the same old swamping originality and individuality of treatment, though he often irritates scientific men by his reservations. The best of his songs and ballads—so tender and true, as plaintive as *rispetti*, or mournful as the sea that beats against his own North Devon coast that he and Hawker¹ loved so well—are in *Andromeda and other Poems* (1858). This contains *The Three Fishers*, *The Sands of Dee*, *Airly Beacon*, "My fairest child, I have no song to give you," "It was Earl Haldan's daughter," "Oh, England is a pleasant place for them that's rich and high," "Welcome wild north-easter," "The merry brown hares came leaping"; in addition to *Andromeda* itself, a poem of 490 lines, containing the finest hexameters known to English verse, some of them going far to justify the selection of such a metre. Subsequent to *Andromeda* came a few more ballads, the playful invitation to Snowdon, "Come away with me, Tom" (Hughes), the delightful songs in *The Water Babies*, including "When all the world is young, lad," and the strange, successful witchery of *Lorraine Lorree*. Achievement this for a minor poet!

HENRY KINGSLEY, his brother, was born at Barnack Rectory, a fourteenth-century house with a famous haunted room, in January, 1830, and educated at King's College and Worcester College, Oxford (1850-53); there he diverted himself on the river and at the "Fez," a college coterie, but took no degree, and sailed

¹ Robert Stephen Hawker, parson of Morwenstow, who lived in that cliff corner of the Devon and Cornwall frontier facing the Atlantic surges and tempests between Hartland and Bude, a mixture of anchorite and scald, with the faith of the thirteenth century and a strange faculty for university epigram of the nineteenth, wrote a number of stirring ballads—*The Silent Tower of Botreaux* and *The Song of the Western Men* ("And shall Trelawny die?"—the burden of which alone is of ancient origin). He also wrote a fragment in blank-song on *The Quest of the Sangreal* (1864), the precious goblet containing the blood from the side of Christ which Joseph of Arimathea had treasured in secret. He oppressed impartially wreckers and votaries of the old Cornish lay,

"A billowy sea and a shattering wind
The cliffs before and the gale behind,"

Methodists and Bible Christians—John Wesley, he said, came to Cornwall and changed the vices of the country. Born at Stoke Damerel in 1804, he died at Plymouth in 1875.

away, with two friends, to make a fortune in Australia. It was doubted whether he was even alive when, in 1858, after nearly two hours' hesitation in the immediate vicinity of the front door, he walked into the rectory at Chelsea. He followed in the wake of his parents to the neighbourhood of his famous brother at Eversley, where he took a cottage, and in 1859 wrote *Geoffrey Hamlyn*. His other big book, bigger than its predecessor, *Ravenshoe*, followed in 1861. In 1864 he married and went to live at Wargrave. *Austin Elliot* appeared in 1863, and the autobiographical *Hillyars and Burtons* (containing many allusions to the Chelsea life) in 1865. The Australian episodes in this, as in *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, have made these two books popular in the great island continent, while they still interest Europe as truthful presentations of early colonisation. Henry Kingsley's power of delineating striking types of individual character was undoubtedly superior to that of his better-known brother, and in *Ravenshoe* he combines a few of these outstanding figures with the idea of a code of aristocratic obligation and honour, which—despite a certain amount of bluster and coarseness—is felt to be fundamentally an ennobling conception.

In 1856 appeared Charles Reade's first popular and largely planned novel, built up on the dossier or blue-book system (which he pursued in common with G. A. Sala, Zola, Sardou), and entitled *It is Never Too Late to Mend*. The dramatic power, sensational description, and didactic value of this work were widely held to outweigh its faults of taste and construction—many and numerous though these were. The type of the Reade novel was thenceforth settled. It consisted of a succession of stage dialogues embedded in a medium of newspaper reporting (of the sensational "special commissioner" order), the machine being so constructed as to serve as a formidable guillotine to some lurking abuse in our social system. Thus *It is Never Too Late to Mend* was designed to expose the cruelties practised in provincial prisons. *Hard Cash* (1862, serially), similarly gibbeted the abuses of private asylums, *Foul Play* (1879) the cruelties of coffin ships and the iniquities of ship knackers, *Put Yourself in his Place* (1869-70), the terrorism practised by trade unions. He thus anticipated, to a large extent, the type of book that Zola gave to the world in *Germinal* (though Reade certainly lacked Zola's large and serious earnestness of purpose), and he gave Zola's work the sanction of his approval when he dramatised *L'Assommoir* in the melodrama (which the impersonation of Charles Warner rendered so appalling) of *Drink*. Reade, however, is seen at his best, not in his regular type of reformatory novel, but in two remarkable works which fall outside this groove: the problem novel of *Griffith Gaunt* and the archæological, yet vivid and intensely human, romance of *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

II

ANTHONY TROLLOPE, son of Thomas Anthony Trollope, a Chancery barrister, who married in May, 1809, Frances Milton (she blossomed out at fifty as a popular writer), was born in Keppel Street, Russell Square, on April 24th, 1815. In an evil hour the father invested most of his money in a farm in Harrow Weald, and his failure entailed an exceptionally wretched childhood and youth upon the future novelist. He was sent to Harrow school as a day-boy; his appearance was neglected; he never had any pocket-money. The result was that he was treated by the boys as a pariah, and the masters were snobs (and cads) enough to follow the lead of their pupils. The result was that Anthony Trollope was taught nothing, and was cruelly disheartened and discouraged. Even Mrs. Trollope's notorious satire on the domestic manners of our American cousins was unable to restore the finances of her unfortunate husband, who had long renounced practical farming for a chimerical encyclopædia dealing with the whole range of ecclesiastical learning. The Trollopes had to achieve a hasty flight to Bruges, where the father and one brother died.

Anthony was in 1834 pitch-forked as a clerk into the Post Office, on a salary of £90, and

remained for seven reckless and uncomfortable years, haunted by duns, undesirable acquaintances, and constant fears of dismissal, on a lofty stool at St. Martin's-le-Grand. In 1841 he was moved to Ireland (as P.O. Surveyor's clerk) and a complete change came over his career. Outdoor life, with plenty of riding, interest in the work, and a newly awakened sense of responsibility (accentuated by his marriage in 1844) developed his business aptitudes, and gave him a new zest. The family instinct for story-telling found a congenial soil for development. Trollope challenged his pen, and began that habit of weaving life-histories to suit the more or less prosaic characters he encountered in his travels—a habit from which he only desisted on his deathbed. The results of his secret toil were first made manifest in 1847, when T. C. Newby (publisher of *Wuthering Heights*) brought out his *Madermots of Ballycloran*. Two further novels achieved the honour of print, and not much more. Meanwhile, Trollope was inspecting rural posts in England, and on one summer evening, at the end of June, 1852, he was wandering round the close of Salisbury, and the beautiful lanes adjacent, when the idea of *The Warden* came into his head. It was

quite a small canvas of the kind that, in his normal working trim, Trollope would easily have covered in six weeks; but it contains some of his freshest colours and, though its success was small, it attracted the attention of connoisseurs. The remaining stories of the Barchester series followed at intervals: *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Dr. Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), *The Small House at Allington* (1864), *The Last Chronicle of Barset* (1867). By this time he had widened his range considerably, and worked his way up to £3,000 for a fully developed three-volume novel. He had also settled near London, and entered literary society mainly through the connection he formed with *The Cornhill* and its first editor. *The Cornhill* was to appear in January, 1860, and every kind of arrangement had been made in advance to ensure a complete triumph. But Thackeray, characteristically, had omitted to provide the new argosy with its heavy ballast in the shape of a first-class serial, and it was not until November that, under the greatest pressure of urgency, Trollope was induced to furnish the serial under the onerous conditions (to any ordinary writer) that 20,000 words were to be in the printer's hands by December 12th. But Thackeray was a man of genius, and his intuition had guided him to the very man he required in such an emergency. For Trollope is the most systematic writer of whom authentic record exists—not even excluding Emile Zola. Every morning he rose at 5.30, corrected previous work for half an hour, and then proceeded to cover ten sheets of quarto paper, 250 words on each sheet (to prevent mistakes, he had them counted). Thus, omitting Saturdays and Sundays, he produced, roughly, 50,000 words a month with the utmost regularity. It became a kind of fixed ambition with him to excel all his contemporaries in *quantity*. Excessively practical and matter-of-fact in almost every relation of life, in this single particular Trollope was an idealist.

Trollope's novels are a secondary product of the literary forces which produced the great

fiction of the 'fifties. The *grand sérieux* and indignant satire of Dickens, Thackeray, and Eliot had created a vacuum, as it were, in the lower atmosphere of fiction, where the more humdrum and material ideals of the great middle class awaited an explorer capable of a patient appreciation of the usual, and of keeping his nose close down, dog-like, to the prosaic texture of life. Trollope's insight, humour, pathos, are all sufficiently ordinary. He has breadth rather than depth, clearness rather than delicacy of perception and delineation. His special gifts are perhaps twofold. The feminine one, inherited from his mother, that Scheherazade¹ faculty of spinning an interminable tale out of what seems a very trivial and everyday imbroglio. Secondly, a kind of objective imagination, with the help of which he pictured to himself all the ordinary combinations and middle levels of life, while carefully avoiding alike both the summits and abysses, whether social, moral, intellectual, or psychological. Trollope had been in a position to observe all sorts and conditions of middle-class life, and his mind had that kind of average shrewdness in deduction, which, given a small clue, enabled him to reproduce ordinary middle-class conditions with minute detail and a most extraordinary fidelity. Beyond this he scarcely ever got. Between 1855 and 1869 Trollope created a number of unforgettable scenes in his great novels.² In 1864 he gave up his official work, and edited a new magazine called *St. Paul's*, which eventually failed. He went on writing all kinds of books, many of them very indifferent (for he was a poor critic, and hated reconsidering an opinion or rewriting a sentence), until his death at his Sussex house at Harting, on December 6th, 1882. He had made, roughly, £80,000 by his writings. His later life was as contented and optimistic as his early life was wretched. Few were found to envy his good fortune, for he was one of the kindest-hearted and most generous, as he was also one of the most boisterous, tactless, and unmetaphysical of writing men.

¹ The term "Scheherazade" was appropriated by Dickens to Mrs. Gaskell.

² First the five of the Barchester series, or six if we include *The Small House at Allington*, which by means of the De Courcys and Pallisers links this group to *Can you Forgive Her?* (1864), and so to the political series including *Phineas Finn* (1869) and *Phineas Redux* (1874), its slightly inferior sequel. The striking figure of the Old Bailey lawyer Chaffanbrass connects these two admirable though lengthy works with *The Three Clerks* (1858) and the sensational and melodramatic *Orley Farm* (1862). Lizzie Eustace forms another link between *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873) and *Phineas Redux*. *The Claverings* (1867) and *The Way we Live Now*, to which some would add *He Knew he was Right*, are the only outstanding novels in the first line of Trollope.

CHAPTER XI

MATTHEW ARNOLD, WALTER PATER, AND OTHER CRITICS: NEWMAN AND SPENCER: THE CONFLICT OF VICTORIAN THOUGHT

I

"Matthew Arnold's melancholy and his resistance to that melancholy appear only in his verse. As a prose writer, while he is at heart serious, his temper is buoyant, his spirit is high, his intellectual confidence is entire; he has charming airs of condescension, and can employ with a grave purpose mockery, banter, irony."—PROF. DOWDEN.

BORN at Laleham, near Staines, on Christmas Eve, 1822, Matthew Arnold was taken to Rugby by his father, the famous Dr. Arnold, on his appointment to the headmastership in 1828; but he soon returned to Laleham, to his uncle's school there, until, in 1836, he was sent to Winchester, where, after a year he was removed to the schoolhouse at Rugby. In 1840, with a school prize poem to his credit, Matthew Arnold won an open scholarship at Balliol; he won the Newdigate with a poem on *Cromwell* in 1843 and, graduating next year with second-class honours—was elected Fellow of Oriel in 1845. After acting as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, and as a master at Rugby, he accepted an inspectorship of schools in 1851—an irksome post at first, but attached to a salary which enabled him at once to marry. He held the post until 1885. In the meantime he had served the four years' term of the Chair of Poetry at Oxford (1857-61), had lectured in the United States, and been presented with a civil list pension of £250 in recognition of his services to literature. He died suddenly of heart-disease (exacerbated by a rash attempt to jump a hurdle) at Liverpool, on April 15th, 1888, and was buried in the little riverside church of Laleham, which he had long regarded with a pious affection. A disappointing, somewhat meagre and innutritious selection from his *Letters* appeared in two volumes in 1895.

His first little volume of poetry, *The Strayed Reveller and other Poems*, was published in 1849 under the initial "A." In 1852 followed *Empedocles on Etna and other Poems*, containing *Tristram and Iseult*, the third canto of which revealed a new master of descriptive poetry. *Sohrab and Rustum* first appeared in 1853 in *Poems*, by Matthew Arnold, containing most of his best verse up to this date. The *New Poems* of 1867 contained *Thyrsis*, *A Southern Knight*, and almost all that he wrote of the highest quality in verse subsequent to 1853, with the exception of *Rugby Chapel*.

His appointment as Professor of Poetry at Oxford prompted two of his most valuable efforts in literary criticism—*On Translating Homer: Three Lectures* (1861), and *On Translating Homer: Last Words* (1862). It was followed in 1867 by an equally fascinating, academic, and unauthoritative¹ essay *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867). His critical abilities were shown to better advantage in the epoch-making *Essays on Criticism*, of 1865, of which a second series appeared only in 1888. Arnold's crusade against English Philistinism culminated in *Culture and Anarchy*, more essays, in 1869, and a diatribe on the backward Hebraism of our religious beliefs in *Literature and Dogma: An Essay towards a better Apprehension of the Bible* (1873). Aberrations from the higher vocation to be the *Vates Sacer* of his generation, to which he had responded

¹ "With bricks of ignorance and mortar of assumption you can build no critical house" (Saintsbury).



Photo, London Stereoscopic Co.

Matthew Arnold

from 1852 to 1862, these essays are brilliant excursions in style—more gracious, direct, and perspicuous, than had hitherto been known in England.

Few men could have openly unfurled the standard of crusade against the bad civilisation of the middle class (the class to which he essentially belonged) without leaving a reputation of unbearable priggishness of condescension behind him; but Arnold did it, and more than that, he never was quite a prig, even in his most youthful and least tolerant moments. He was saved by two delightful qualities—kindliness and humour. After Charles Lamb, it is doubtful if any man of letters of the nineteenth century is more justly celebrated for his smile—so cordial, so encouraging, so heart-winning. His recognition of beauty, of good spirits, of felicity of any kind, was similarly generous and beneficent. It extended even to a sally of his own that he had forgotten with the lapse of time. "Did I really say that?" he would interject, "how good that was!" High-minded, sincere, pious, kindly, and broad-hearted, a better man in the ordinary human relations has seldom been portrayed in the letters or testimonies of those who best knew him.

From a very early period Arnold's master passion was the vindication of the ideal human type (as he conceived it) against perverting influences of every kind. He tended, as time went on, to be more and more insistently

critical. The claims of good citizenship and other such malign influences led him to consecrate to his own time and to those around him what was meant for poetry and the times to come. His style, the animation of which was continually rising, undoubtedly lightened and simplified English prose, and his prose penetrated the literary thought of his time. But his poetry had in it elements and possibilities of greater value to humanity. The one thing that it lacks is that complete fusion of rhythmic and metrical harmony with the general harmonic scheme based upon the sense, which is so indispensable to the true greatness of poetry. In his best passages he attains it by a kind of hazardous felicity, but more often than not the emphasis of sound and the emphasis of sense coincide but in a halting and desultory manner. That an artist who, in *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gypsy*¹ had recaptured so much of the magical illusion and rhythmic beauty of Keats's finest odes, would not have achieved an even surer measure of success, is, to our thinking, highly improbable. But what happened was that in 1862, or thereabouts, for reasons which we can explain, but must, as lovers of fine poetry, continue to deplore, Arnold decided to ramble away in ever-enlarging curves from the banks of his Helicon. He renounced the higher vocation, not for Gray's reason, but in obedience to some atavistic instinct which constrained him to exchange the lyre of Apollo Musagetes for the serpent of Æsculapius.

As a poet Arnold owed a good deal unquestionably to Goethe, to Heine, and to Gautier, whose views about the sanctity of artistic form he shared to a large extent; but, in the main, he stands between Wordsworth (in his "The world is too much with us" mood) and his other favourite Senancour, sharing the spiritual force of the one with the reflective melancholy of the other. His best descriptions are tinged with melancholy. The infinite desire of what might have been, the *lachrymæ rerum*, inspires *Resignation*, one of the finest pieces in his early volume. We see it again in the touching close of *The Church of Brou*. It determines the poet's preference for pale colours, soft lights, and subdued sounds; for moonlight effects, and for the hum of "brooding mountain bees." In the deeply sighed lines of *Dover Beach*, it is associated with his sense of the decay of faith. Even in the lyric rapture of the sea-caverns in the *Forsaken Merman*, the melancholy abides. But this same thoughtful melancholy renders him a supreme elegiac poet. *Thyrsis*, the memorial poem of his Oxford friend, Arthur Hugh Clough, is generally ranked with the masterpieces of Tennyson, Shelley—even Milton; nor does it stand alone. *The Scholar Gypsy*, the Obermann poems, *Rugby Chapel*, *A Southern Night*, belong to the same class of this scholarly species. Judged by his own unmeaning "criticism of life" test, it must be admitted that Arnold's poetry is profoundly unsatisfactory. The combination of moral truth and natural magic is only to be found in an unusually negative and reflected state in what we must consider his best poetry. For nature never took the pen out of his hand and wrote for him, as it did sometimes for Shakespeare, or Marlowe, or Spenser, or Wordsworth, or even for the despised "peasant" Burns, or Shelley, and that "set." The flowers from the lap of nature (as in *Winter's Tale*) are few, and, substituted for them, we feel at times, are pot-herbs, cultivated and sheltered by the grey wall of an Oxford garden. The open-air drawing, the vivid sketch, have no place beside the photograph from the Hermes of Praxiteles or the Graffito portrait of Dante in the don's study. There

¹ "Such English-coloured verse," says Swinburne very finely, "no poet has written since Shakespeare."

are, however, striking exceptions; the scenery of the Oxford valley has never been expressed before, and will never be painted again, as in the two famous elegies—in *Thyrsis*, for instance:

So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry
From the wet fields through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I.
Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,

Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar
And open jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening star.

This can surely challenge comparison with the passage the memory of which it evokes in *In Memoriam*, and, exquisite as it is, it is rivalled in every respect by strophes in the *Scholar Gypsy*, by the opening strain in *Bacchanalia*, by the first song of Callicles in *Empedocles*, or the long description by Ægyptus embedded in the tragedy of *Merope*, a description worthy of that by the messenger at the close of the *Hippolytus* of Euripides.

II

THE literary celebrity of Walter Pater is a creation of the modern critic. Looking around the field of our literature after the deaths of Newman, Matthew Arnold, and Mark Pattison, the purveyors of picturesque criticism became sensible of the fact that there was a highly eligible vacancy for a cloistered, exquisite, and, if possible, pre-Raphaelite Oxford don. The result was the discovery of Walter Pater, who added to his other pre-eminent qualifications that of being a bachelor and also, in a very mild way, an eccentric. There was in him, together with a species of unworldly isolation which is even now by no means so very rare in Oxford, an ardour for the pursuit of Culture in one of its classical and more recondite forms which is still, as the rawest of Rhodes scholars would admit, a not uncommon characteristic, and by no means an unamiable or unworthy one, of the beautiful city of the dreaming spires. A refined and *plusquam* perfect rather than pellucid style was another elegant peculiarity which Pater shared equally with several tribes of the great donnish race. In other respects he was almost preternaturally donnish—as dons were in the sweet simplicity of the eighteen-seventies. He wore a top hat and a silken tie of a pallid æsthetic hue in which he walked down the High every afternoon about a quarter before five on his way to read the papers at the Union, looking neither to the right nor to the left, supercilious to undergraduates, and cutting his most intimate colleagues with a coolness that appeared positively *farouche* to those who were unaware that he was extremely short-sighted. Reserved alike to colleagues and pupils, he knew how to make respected the sanctity of his study, where he worked gently every morning in the society of his plaster casts and autotypes. His pale face and heavy moustache were the delight of amateur caricaturists, and, cleverer than they, the satirist who wrote *The New Republic*. The pagan Mr. Rose has always been considered one of its most felicitous burlesque figures. "What an odd man Mr. Rose is," said Lady Ambrose; "he always seems to talk of everybody as if they had no clothes on." It was this oddity that secured to Pater his outside fame. Many of his coevals at Oxford had ability and talent fully equivalent to his; but they overlooked this incentive to *réclame*. It must be said greatly in Pater's honour that he did not make his pose of Art for Art ridiculous by extravagance. He did not read the lessons in chapel holding a lily in his hand; nor did he profess his despair at his inability to live up to his blue china. From another infirmity, alike of the amateur and academic author—the desire of being printed and published as extensively as possible—he was conspicuously free.

In the few words proclaiming him a college don of Oxford from 1864 to 1894, who wrote two or three essays annually in the leading reviews, travelled largely on foot in South-west Europe, spent a winter in Rome, lectured on Plato and published a novel of culture dealing with the psychology of an epicurean under the late Empire, Pater's biography is told, well-nigh exhaustively. It is needful only to add that he was born in Shadwell, in East London, on August 4th, 1839, brought up at Enfield—Charles Lamb's last home—under the roof of his father, a doctor, educated at Marlowe's school at Canterbury, and at Queen's College, Oxford, wasted time over Ruskin and Goethe, obtained a second-class only in "greats," but secured a fellowship at Brasenose in 1864. He died in his rooms at Brasenose on July 30th, 1894, aged fifty-four. His *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, mainly gleanings from previous essays in *The Portnightly*, was published by Macmillan in 1873 (second edition 1877); *Marius the Epicurean*, begun in 1881, was issued in 1885. A resident in Kensington during the next few years, Pater was in request as a reviewer in extraordinary for outstanding books, Amiel's *Journal*, Robert Elsmere, *Dorian Gray*; he also wrote on Style, Sir Thomas Browne, Flaubert, Bruno, Raphael, Mérimée, and Pascal, essays which appeared again for the most part either in *Appreciations* (1889) or *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895). Some of his most suggestive and perhaps of his best work is contained in *Imaginary Portraits* (1887) and *Greek Studies* (1894), containing essays on Dionysius, the Bacchanals of Euripides, Demeter and Persephone, Hippolytus, early Greek sculpture, the Æginetan marbles, and "The Age of Athletic Prizemen." In the *Imaginary Portraits* and *Marius* he is seen struggling after an impossible perfection of style. The result is often a studious confusion, but it conveyed to Pater a remarkable power of divination as to the crevices and joints in other artists' work. This was communicated, to some extent, in all his critical writing. The faculty in question is capable of suggesting the most elusive and advanced elements in criticism as a fine art; but it also opens the door to a dangerous Grand Lamaism in criticism which expresses itself oracularly and hermetically, engendering a novel type of euphuism destructive to the primary needs of lucidity and clear meaning in letters.

At the other extreme of the critical range to Pater are the two critics, *par excellence*, of common sense and cold masculinity, as opposed to æsthetic enthusiasm—Walter Bagehot (1826—1877) and Sir Leslie Stephen (1832—1903). As literary critics they have a good deal in common. Both like to get at the man behind the book, and deduce a good deal from how he lived, what he made, and how he spent. Both are inclined to be cynical, and to blow sharply across the froth of sentimental adulation. Their hero-worship was kept well in leash by humour. Both are free from the pedantry of literary experts (with their “objective,” “romantic,” realistic, and the rest) and the cant of criticism. What Stephen says of Bagehot applies almost equally to himself: “His mind was so alert, his interest in life so keen, and his powers of illustration so happy, that he could give freshness even to talk upon the British Constitution and liveliness to a discussion of the Bank Reserve. He could not, that is, be dull or commonplace even on the driest or tritest topics.” The balance between the extreme schools of sensitivism and common sense was admirably held by Hutton.

R. H. Hutton, theologian and critic, was born at Leeds in 1826, and was the son and grandson of Unitarian ministers. His parents removing to London, he was sent to University College, where he distinguished himself in philosophy and mathematics. After semesters at Heidelberg and Berlin, he studied under James Martineau for the Unitarian ministry. His preaching was unpopular, and he gave himself to journalism and teaching. In 1855 he joined his friend Bagehot in conducting *The National Review*, which lasted till 1864. The review contained many brilliant articles from W. C. Roscoe, James Martineau, and others, but never achieved a pecuniary success. Hutton, under the influence of F. W. Robertson and Maurice, became a member of the Church of England, and continued his theological studies. But he found his true place when in 1861 he became joint editor and part proprietor of *The Spectator* with Mr. Meredith Townsend. Hutton thenceforward devoted himself to journalism, and preached through the press. His influence became very great. In *The Spectator* he handled political, theological, philosophical, and literary subjects with continued industry and much grasp. Theologically he fell under the sway of Newman, and came near to the Roman Catholic position, although he maintained himself that he was never a sacerdotalist, though ultimately a strong sacramentarian. In his literary criticisms he addressed himself chiefly to the ethical and theological position of his authors. For the literary side he had a true appreciation, but it was overshadowed by his dominating interests. In *The Spectator* he fought the battle of a spiritual faith against Huxley and Tyndall. Most of his books were reprints of articles. The most important is his *Essays, Theological and Literary*, printed in 1871. They are mainly taken from *The National Review*, but with considerable modifications. He found time to contribute a volume on Sir Walter Scott to the English Men of Letters Series, and he wrote a study of Newman into which he put a great deal of very hard work. Several volumes of his *Spectator* essays were published before and after his death, and he wrote memoirs of his friends Roscoe and Bagehot. In another style he published a bright book of travels, *Holiday Rambles in Ordinary Places, by a Wife with her Husband* (1877). This was wholly written by Hutton, and gives a good idea of his few recreations. His life went on in an almost unbroken round of labour till he died in 1897. It cannot be said that Hutton was in any marked degree an original writer. He had three masters in his life, and in a measure he remained faithful to all. These were Martineau, Maurice, and Newman. No one did more to popularise the thoughts of these men than Hutton, and to Maurice in particular his services were unique.

III. NINETEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT

“Nearly all our powerful men in this age of the world are unbelievers . . . our popular authors either set themselves definitely against all religious forces, pleading for simple truth and benevolence (Dickens, Thackeray), or give themselves up to bitter and fruitless statement of facts (Balzac), or surface painting (Scott), or careless blasphemy, sad or smiling (Byron, Bulwer, Béranger). Our earnest poets and deepest thinkers are doubtful and indignant (Tennyson, Carlyle); one or two anchored, indeed, but anxious or weeping (Wordsworth, Mrs. Browning); and of these two the first is not so sure of his anchor, but that now and then it drags with him.”—RUSKIN, *Modern Painters*.

Bentham—Mill—Newman—Maurice—Spencer—Darwin—Huxley.

APART from the important development of historical science during the nineteenth century, the thought-movements of this period may be tentatively grouped under four chief heads: (1) The movement connected with the philosophical radicals, which reached its climax in 1832, and began to decline soon after the middle of the century (Bentham, Mill). (2) The counter-reformation known as the Oxford Movement, the indicating number of which amidst a group of comparative ciphers was the great personality of John Henry Newman. (3) The Broad Church Movement, represented in its various phases by Coleridge and Thomas Arnold, by F. D. Maurice, Robertson of Brighton, and Dean Stanley, which attempted to find an anti-dogmatic basis for a revival of English Church activity. (4) The attempt made to supply a literary *novum organum* which should represent the expansive claims of physical science to formulate a philosophical system of its own (Spencer, Darwin, Huxley).

The movement which had for its object the perfecting of human institutions by substituting logic for tradition, and common-sense system for the casual and somewhat chaotic structure under which vested interest sheltered itself in the name of “ancient authority,” can be traced back pretty clearly to John Locke. It

owed much, however, to the French philosophers of the eighteenth century, and through them in part to the early apologists of the French Revolution, such as Tom Paine, Priestley, Price, Mackintosh, to whom should perhaps be added the names of Horne Tooke and Benjamin Franklin. But a large proportion of these and kindred thinkers shaded imperceptibly into orthodox Whig partisans, and were commonly prepared to compound with aristocracy if only they would abandon their superstitions, their sinecures, and their war taxes. The radicalism of Horne Tooke, for instance, a comfortable old gentleman with a good cellar of Madeira, and a garden full of wall fruit, approximated to that of a sturdy retired tradesman, who wanted to get rid of five or six flagrant abuses, and then to repose in the enjoyment of a liberty grafted upon a rich stock of national tradition.

The most thorough-going of these theorists, who was prepared to reorganise (on paper) the whole existing code of morals and jurisprudence, and the real founder of the school, was Jeremy Bentham. The son of a well-to-do London merchant, Bentham was born in Houndsditch on February 4th, 1748. Extraordinary precocity was the mark of all these philosophical radicals, and at three years old Jeremy ran away during a dull walk, and was found by his parents on their return poring over the pages of Rapin's History. School and college routine at Westminster and Queen's College, Oxford, proved extremely distasteful to him, and he complained bitterly at the cruelty of school and of the laziness, vice, and horseplay that were rampant at Oxford. His precocity procured him companions older than himself, among whom his natural diffidence took on a morbid excess. He was impressed, however, by the lectures of Blackstone, and became an ardent student of Locke, Helvetius, and Beccaria; for these and kindred studies he neglected his legal career, lived like a youthful hermit among his papers and note-books, and in 1776 put forth his remarkably precocious *Fragment on Government*, which gained him the friendship of Lord Shelburne, who invited him to Bowood and treated him as 'a full-fledged philosopher, and later on that of his eminent disciple, the great pioneer and reformer of our criminal law, Sir Samuel Romilly. A visit to his brother, a great pioneer of Western industries in the south of Russia, considerably widened his horizon, and after extensive literary preparations, including some pamphleteering, he commenced upon his synthetic philosophy in 1789 with his *Introduction to the Principles and Morals of Legislation*. In this epoch-making work, starting with the postulate that nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters—pain and pleasure—who indicate clearly enough when questioned what men ought to do and what they ought to avoid, he defines the end of government to be the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and the means of obtaining this a properly regulated system of justice. In spite of the care with which he dissociated his aims from those of the Jacobins, and repudiated the theory of abstract rights as embodied in the American Declaration of Independence, or as developed by the sentimentalists and followers of Rousseau, his schemes of legislative reform were to a large extent submerged in the tide of reaction induced by the excesses of the French Revolution. But, in the meantime, as condensed and clarified by his great French interpreter Dumont, his schemes attained to an extraordinary celebrity abroad, and fragments of his system are to be found buried in many of the continental codes, notably in Spain and Russia. In England, too, as the tide of reaction began to ebb, Bentham's theories, mainly through the agency of his disciples, began to permeate the minds of legislators.

The new school of radical reformers and politicians were interpenetrated with his ideas. Bentham himself in April, 1824, supplied funds for *The Westminster Review*, which supplied the platform of the more advanced school of political thought to which the philosopher had gradually approximated. Most of the radicals of that day were in close contact with Bentham's scheme at one point or another of its large circumference, and by most of the leaders, including such diverse types as Romilly, Burdett, Place, Hunt, Edgeworth, Cartwright, Wooler, Hone, Owen, Brougham, Ricardo, and William Allen, he was regarded with more or less of distant reverence. Of close intimates among his disciples he had but few—hardly any, in fact, except Romilly, besides Bowring, his biographer, and James Mill, his right-hand man on *The Westminster*, and one of the chief exponents of his views. And so living, for the most part in strict retirement, the life of a most methodical savant whose habits of work had acquired the sacredness of a ritual at Ford Abbey, near Chard, "codifying like a dragon," and aspiring to the position of acknowledged codifier-in-chief to all the states of Europe and America, absorbed in the rational presentation of a theory, with the practical application of which he had no concern, almost entirely ignorant of human character and of the world of men outside the close area of his own statistics, calculations, and inductions, Bentham remained to the end in many respects a scientific and erudite child.

John Stuart Mill (1806—1873), the eldest son of James Mill, author of *The History of British India*, was born on May 20th, 1806, at 13, Rodney Street, Pentonville. He was educated entirely by his father, and at the age of three began to learn Greek, and by his eighth year had read many Greek prose authors, starting with Æsop's *Fables* and Xenophon's *Anabasis*, and continuing with Herodotus, parts of Lucian, Socrates, Diogenes, Laertius, and six dialogues of Plato. From 1810 to 1813 the Mills resided at Newington Green, where, in their daily walks before breakfast, the child used to give his father accounts of his readings in Gibbon, Robertson, Hume, and his favourite Watson's *Philip II. and III.* In his eighth year he commenced learning Latin, teaching it to his younger brothers and sisters as he went on, and by his twelfth year had read a considerable part of Virgil, Horace, Livy, Sallust, Ovid, Terence, and Cicero; and in Greek *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* through, parts of the dramatists, historians, and orators, and Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. For private reading his taste lay in the direction of history, but chiefly ancient history; and

during his eleventh and twelfth years he wrote a history of the Roman Government, with the assistance of Hooke, but in contempt of his childish efforts destroyed it a few years later. Between the ages of eight and thirteen he acquired elementary geometry and algebra thoroughly. In 1818 appeared his father's *History of India*, which impressed him greatly, and in 1819 he went through a complete course of political economy. A child-classic, a boy-logician, at thirteen he went stolidly through Ricardo's tracts on the Bullion controversy. He makes little complaint of this inhumanity, though it seems as if the fibres of his emotional being were strained to the utmost by it. The tension was relieved by visits to Bentham and to France, whence he returned with aspirations to be a Girondin in an English revolution. On his return he progressed very rapidly and became a friend of John Austin, a Beccarian in hostility to the "chaos of barbarism" called English law, a fluent speaker, the Rupert of Rationalism, and the rising hope of the philosophic radicals. Secured as to revenue by a post under his father in the India House, he was soon contributing ably to *The Westminster Review* and surrounded by a group of brilliant acquaintances, Charles Austin, Sterling, Maurice, Carlyle, and Macaulay. In a slightly altered form he was editor of this organ from 1836 to 1840, and in 1843 he put forth his great book, *The System of Logic*. In this, as opposed to the German, or *à priori*, view of knowledge, he derives all knowledge from experience, and all moral and intellectual qualities principally from the direction given to the associations. The success of the book was very great, and to its author surprising, as was that five years later of his *Principles of Political Economy*, in which the study is related to the larger science of Social Philosophy. His later work could scarcely add to his fame as the most attractive and humane of the radical school of thinkers. But his book *On Liberty* is at once a literary monument and a fervent and stimulating appeal for the largest amount of freedom attainable without licence or anarchy in the mutual dealings of men. In 1865 he entered Parliament, where he "raised the tone of debate," and he died at Avignon in 1873, leaving an *Autobiography* (ascribed by Carlyle to a steam-engine) which affords a moving portrait of one of the most thoughtful and benevolent minds of the epoch.

Newman's is one of those romantic figures which give an infinite picturesqueness to English letters—clearly a born genius of diligent scholarship and clear expression. An isolated and almost grandiose product of an age producing its Byron, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt, its Mills, Macaulays, and Carlyle—the Carlyle who never imperilled his soul more than when he ascribed to this same Newman the brain of a rabbit. The star of Newman's early manhood, like Mark Pattison's, was pre-eminence at Oxford. Born in the City of London on February 21st, 1801, his father was a partner in a banking house, his mother of a not undistinguished Huguenot family—the Fourdriniers. His brother Francis William was a distinguished scholar, his two sisters Harriet and Jemima were his frequent correspondents. Patted on the head as a child by Richard Cumberland, whose delightful *Memoirs* range so far back into the preceding eighteenth century, John Newman was carefully educated at Ealing (Dr. Nicholas); at Trinity (Oxford) he easily eclipsed his contemporaries, and, though he was barely sixteen—that is, two or three years younger than the ordinary age—he obtained a nine-year scholarship, and worked with an unrelenting seriousness with a view of taking a high class (class lists at all were a novelty in those days). He went up for examination in November, 1820, and having overtaxed his powers broke down badly, obtaining merely a pass degree. The gravity and expression of his letters home in connection with this, to him, overwhelming event were extraordinarily beyond his years. A fellowship was the desired haven of his career. He was undeterred by a failure which he knew himself to be no measure of his intellectual powers, and resolved on trying for an Oriel fellowship, the blue ribbon of Oxford in those days and the object and ambition of all the most promising men.

Troubled about his eyesight, devoted in brief hours of recreation to music, to Crabbe, and to Sir Walter Scott, we get an idea of Newman from the *Apologia*, from *Loss and Gain*, and from his vivid and wonderfully modulated *Letters*. But his most serious preoccupations were already religious, even though we find him trying to take the edge off his intellectual curiosity by projecting studies in mineralogy, chemistry, and Persian. Far more to him than Sir Walter was Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford (to whom humanly speaking, says he, "I almost owe my soul"), Jones of Nayland, and Keble. From early days he was an imaginative believer in eternal punishment, who crossed himself whenever he went into the dark. To live and die a fellow of Oriel had always been and, in a sense, it always remained the height of his ambition, and on April 12th, 1822, at the first attempt (mainly by aid of his Latin composition and mathematics) he achieved it. Who can forget his "Thank God," in the letter to his father, or the vivid description of the excitement in his autobiographical sketches? So hard did he work at this time that he often quite trembled on retiring to rest at his own exertions. It seems marvellous that he could have worked so hard without serious injury, but the spirit of a seventeenth-century scholar was in him.

In September, 1824, came the touching letter on the death of his father with this self-revelation: "When I die, shall I be followed to the grave by my children? My mother said the other day she hoped to live to see me married; but I think I shall either die within college walls, or as a missionary in a foreign land. No matter where, so that I die in Christ." He was much influenced intellectually by Whateley, and onwards from 1826, when he became tutor at Oriel, by Pusey and R. H. Froude. He completely shed his early Calvinism and evangelicalism, and got stronger and stronger in his anti-Erastian feeling, a brief tendency to liberalism being checked for ever in 1827 by illness and bereavement. Vicar of St. Mary's in 1828, he came out of his shell, and remained out until 1841; his sermons caused him to be regarded as the leading influence at Oxford.

In 1828 Newman was partly responsible for the unfortunate selection of Dr. Hawkins, rather than

Keble, as Provost of Oriel in succession to Copleston—an election which, according to Pattison, marks the beginning of the transference of the hegemony among Oxford colleges from Oriel to Balliol. One of Hawkins's early measures was to quarrel with three of his ablest tutors about a delegation of authority, and in 1832 the three chief buttresses of that college (Newman, Wilberforce, and Froude) resigned their tutorships. The whole of the subsequent transformation sprang from this miscalculated choice. Newman went abroad with Hurrell Froude, was dangerously ill in Sicily, and on his return voyage, while becalmed within the straits of Bonifacio, wrote "Lead, kindly Light." On July 9th, 1833, he reached his mother's house at Ilfley. Five days later Keble preached his assize sermon at St. Mary's on "National Apostasy," which Newman considered the start of the Oxford Movement.

The first cause of the movement was, of course, the anomalous position of the Anglican Church, which had become a province of the oligarchy officered by younger sons. It stood apart from foreign Protestantism; its ignorance of Rome, and consequently of what it protested against, was colossal, it was conscious of itself only as an establishment—it had produced some very great men since the days of the non-jurors, when it had mislaid its historical conscience, but these had either been great scholars in their studies, such as Berkeley, Butler, Warburton, Thomas Scott, or revivalists, evangelicals, and missionaries, such as Wilson, Wesley, Newton, Romaine, Cecil, Venn, Martyn, who were essentially Congregationalists rather than historical Churchmen. A new spiritual beacon was to be raised, an attempt was to be made to realise the historical and cosmic position of the English Church, to examine its connections, its descent, and its title-deeds. In this attempt Newman was to spend the best years of his life.

The growth of liberal opinions and the denudation of the English Church of spiritual and historical ideas, leaving "only pulpit orators at Clapham and Islington and two-bottle orthodox" to defend it, seemed to involve the continued existence of Anglicanism in any form in considerable doubt. Swift had said at the commencement of the eighteenth century that if an Act was passed for the extirpation of the Gospel, Bank Stock might decline 1 per cent.; but a century later it is doubtful if the passing of such a Bill would have left any trace, however evanescent, upon the stability of the money market. The Anglican *via media* had enemies not only in the philosophical radicals, but also in the new caste of men of science. (The first meeting of the British Association took place at Oxford in 1832.) Perhaps, as J. A. Froude suggests, these combined enemies, *The Edinburgh Review*, Brougham, Mackintosh, the Reform Ministry, Low Church philosophy, and the London University were not so very terrible after all. The Church was a vested interest which had a greater stake in the country and was harder to eradicate than they imagined. But it had nothing to give to the historian and the idealist. They were right to fight for what their soul craved after and found in the church of Andrewes, Herbert, Ken, and Waterman. Belief in the divine mission of the Church lingered on in the minds of such men as Alexander Knox or his disciple Bishop Jebb; but few were prepared to answer the question—"What is the Church as spoken of in England? Is it the Church of Christ?"—and the answers were various. Hooker had said it was "the nation"; and in entirely altered circumstances, with some qualifications, Dr. Arnold said the same. It was "the Establishment" according to the lawyers and politicians, both Whig and Tory. It was an invisible and mystical body, said the Evangelicals. It was the aggregate of separate congregations, said the Nonconformists. It was the parliamentary creation of the Reformation, said the Erastians. The true Church was the communion of the Pope; the pretended Church was a legalised schism, said the Roman Catholics. All these ideas were floating about, loose and vague, among people who talked much about the Church.

One thing was persistently obvious—namely, that our nationalist Church had become opportunist in every fibre, and that it had thrown off almost every semblance of ecclesiastical discipline. The view was circulated that the Church owed its continued existence to the good sense of the individuals who officered it, and to the esteem which possession and good sense combined invariably engendered in the reigning oligarchy. But since Christianity was true—and Newman was the one man of modern times who seems never to have doubted this, never to have overlooked the unmistakable threat of eternal punishment to the wicked and unbelieving—modern England, with its march of intellect and its chatter about progress, was advancing with a light heart to the verge of a bottomless abyss. By a diametrically opposite chain of reasoning Newman reached much the same conclusion as Carlyle. Keble and other leaders of the new historical Church movement had looked into no lines of thought but their own. Newman, on the other hand, had read omnivorously; he had studied modern thought and modern life in all its forms, and with all its many-coloured passions. He knew, of course, that many men of learning and ability believed that Christianity was not a revelation at all, but had been thrown out, like other creeds, in the growth of the human mind. He knew that doubts of this kind were the inevitable results of free discussion and free toleration of differences of opinion; and he was too candid to attribute such doubts, as others did, to wickedness of heart. He could not, being what he was, acquiesce in the law of the land because it was there, and because the country had accepted it, and because good general reasons could be given for assuming it to be right. The Protestant was satisfied with the Bible, the original text of which, and perhaps the English translation, he regarded as inspired. But the inspiration itself was an assumption, and had to be proved; and Newman, though he believed the inspiration, seems to have recognised earlier than most of his contemporaries that the Bible was not a single book, but a national literature, produced at intervals, during many hundred years, and under endless varieties of circumstances. Protestant and Catholic alike appealed to it, and they could not both be right. Newman began feeling for this in the direction of the Catholic Church, and in July, 1833, by his sermon

at St. Mary's, Oxford, on National Apostasy Keble gave the signal for the movement that was to lead him. This movement was the direct result of the communing between Keble, Hurrell Froude, and Newman from 1826 to this point. Keble inspired and Froude fanned the flame which Newman kindled to a blaze in the ninetieth of the celebrated "Tracts for the Times." It proved the turning of the ways, leading Keble and Pusey to Anglican ritualism and Newman to Rome. All his great works henceforth are incidents in the Catholic campaign (just as J. A. Froude's great *History* was a pamphlet of Protestant defence) and in hostility to the liberal doctrine that one religion is as good as another, positive truth residing in no single creed. The conversion of Newman was a source of profound irritation to Protestants. Kingsley expressed this sentiment in a magazine of 1864, when he remarked, and tried to illustrate by recent events, that veracity was never one of the virtues of the Roman clergy. After preliminary sparrings, in which he showed an irony as mordant as Pascal's, Newman was stung into writing what he deliberately called *Apologia pro Vita sua*. He had shown his mastery of dialectic in the tracts, of exhortation in the *Sermons*, of exposition in *The Idea of a University* (1852), and of narrative in *Loss and Gain* (1848), a story of his Oxford days, and *Callista* (1856), a sketch of the third century. In the *Apologia* a volume of autobiography is made a chapter of general history, unsurpassed in its kind since the *Confessions* of Augustine, combined with a perfection of form, a precision of phrasing, and a charm of style peculiar to the genius of its author, rendering it one of the masterpieces of English prose. The secret of its success, which was so complete that Newman, from being one of the most unpopular, became at a bound one of the most popular of living Englishmen, was due in the first instance to the genius of the writer; in the second to the sincerity, the manifest candour, and the beauty made visible in the mind that unfolded itself thus; but more perhaps still to the conviction which every phrase and accent confirmed that, however much of a papist Newman might have become, he was still in sentiment, thought, education, and heart-strings an Englishman to the marrow of his bones. And so it came to pass that when he died at Edgbaston in 1890, in his ninetieth year, he was regarded probably with the greatest veneration of any English man of letters, as the writer of the most flexible and musical of any modern English prose, and as the author of three or four hymns, among them the hymn of Gerontius, "Praise to the Holiest in the height," and "Lead, kindly Light," which are among the most spiritual and inspiring that are to be found in any hymnal, ancient or modern. And in the long tenure of his life the attitude of the average Englishman to the Catholic in his midst—regarded before 1845 as of a different stripe to the general, a figure apart, in the shade, and as it were suspect—has been almost entirely transformed.

The defection of Newman and his satellites, and a series of checks received by Puseyism at Oxford, left the field clear for the Low and Broad Church party. But it was no longer the sentimental pietism and blind evangelicalism of the early 'thirties. The Broad Church began at once to make its anti-dogmatic tendencies felt. It was plainly in favour of the complete subordination of Church to state. It began timidly, introducing German biblical criticism into England—an instrument soon to prove itself of explosive force. Jowett and Stanley were at the crises of 1845 deep in Hegel and Baur, and making Unitarian demonstrations, while Dr. Baden-Powell, after following up *Revelation and Science* with *The Unity of Worlds*, makes a determined frontal attack on miracles, and Colenso is pointing out fissures in the Pentateuch which involved him in a severe penalty of unmerited persecution. All the influences of the day, represented by F. W. Newman, A. H. Clough, Buckle, Lecky, and the Martineaus, were ranged in support of this liberalising tendency, which transported the Church from the sphere of positive to that of comparative religion. And of defenders on the mystic or metaphysical side, the old recruiting ground of evangelicalism had been so denuded that two contestants of really first-rate ability such as H. L. Mansel and F. D. Maurice may be said to exhaust the possibilities.

Frederic Denison Maurice (1805—1872), the son of a Unitarian minister, born at Normanston, near Lowestoft, left Cambridge without a degree owing to the difficulty about subscription which he felt as a nonconformist, and began a literary career in London, writing for *The Westminster Review* in its palmiest days under Mill, and for a time guided the destinies of the infant *Athenæum*. Profoundly influenced by the ingeminations of Coleridge he decided to abandon Unitarianism and to enter the English Church. Having obtained an Oxford degree he was ordained, and soon made his pulpit at Vere Street Chapel a well-spring of valuable ideas for the Broad or Liberal Church party who combated the intenser views of the Tractarians. Abandoning the Unitarians on account of their coldness and ultra-rationalistic view of religion, he was the first in England to represent theological formulæ, such as those of the Trinity and the Incarnation, as interpreting essential needs of the human heart and human conscience. The miraculous element in the sacred writings of Christianity was wholly subordinated by him to the ideal conception of a humanised God, whose sufferings found expression in views of charity and humility which appealed directly not only to the brain, but also the heart of a common humanity. In his *Theological Essays* of 1853 (which lost him Professorship of Theology at King's College) he appealed directly for a more tolerant hearing of the inner truths of Christianity by the Unitarians, but his influence deeply stirred and attracted men of the most various types. Men such as Mill, Ruskin, and Carlyle, no less than his immediate disciples Kingsley and Tom Hughes, were sensible to the broad humanity of his religious thought, while he himself expressly disclaimed the inculcation of any hard-and-fast system or doctrine. His books, however, did more probably to save the inmost hold of Christianity from the onrushing tide of materialism and scientific speculation than those of any thinker of his generation; and his conception of Divinity, though far inferior to Newman's in

intensity and magical attraction, was of infinitely greater breadth and homogeneity with the whole trend of modern thought and discovery. His guarded defence of dogma was aided by a character the most winning. Kingsley called him the most beautiful human soul he had known.

Though he occupied a place in the Church to which the narrow and the rigid said he had no business to belong, he was one of the most scrupulous, diffident, and sensitive of men. Yet diffident and really humble as he was, he could be moved to vehement indignation and could be very sharp in controversy. And by an increasing number, especially of working men, he was regarded with the reverence due to a great spiritual teacher. His funeral at Highgate on April 5th, 1872, was followed by crowds, and his grave was a meeting-place of men who had not seen each other for years and were not likely to meet ever again.

Herbert Spencer, the Solon of the Scientific Age, was born at Derby (12, Exeter Row) on April 27th, 1820. His father, William George Spencer, who early in 1819 married Harriet Holmes, was a teacher of an original and unconventional pattern, and author of a highly ingenious book on *Inventional Geometry*. His mother was a good, religious, conservative, lower middle-class woman, in whom, says the philosopher, altruism was too little qualified by egoism. He was not precocious as a lad, except in respect to an almost infantile passion for justice; and he did little to respond to his father's iterated desire that he should become "a useful member of society," though he showed a marked liking for science from an early age. In 1833 he was sent from a local school to be tutored by his uncle, Thomas Spencer, a rather prominent liberal philanthropist, and distinguished himself by running away and making his way home on foot (a boy of thirteen, he walked just upon 120 miles in three days!). He was soon dispatched back to Hinton, was "amicably" received after his escapade, and continued his education there with fair success. As he remarks himself in his impersonal way, "a fair amount of mathematics had been acquired," in the acquisition of languages but trifling success had been achieved, there was no progress in general culture; but, on the whole, his *morale* and reasoning powers had been appreciably strengthened. After a short probation as a school-master, he proceeded to London, having obtained a post on the engineering staff of the London and Birmingham line, and worked as a surveyor upon the line between Wembley and Harrow. In 1838 he was transferred to Worcester and undertook more responsible work, amidst surroundings which tended to the development of his critical and self-assertive tendencies, "already sufficiently pronounced."

Ambition to work out schemes of his own as an inventor led him to abandon his post on the Birmingham and Worcester Railway, in which a prosperous humdrum career lay before him. The immediate result was a blind alley, though but for the seeming failure he recognises that "what has since been done would never have been done." A kind of post-graduate visit to Hinton in 1842 (during which he modelled a bust of his uncle) was the occasion of animated political discussions which led to a series of letters to *The Nonconformist* on "The Proper Sphere of Government" in which we can not obscurely trace the reasoner of *The Man versus the State*. More surveying work following a brief experience as sub-editor of a struggling philosophic weekly was followed in turn by a period of suspense, until he returned to London in 1848 as sub-editor of *The Economist*, and began to write regularly, though already he had discovered that thinking was to him more pleasurable than either reading or doing. In 1850 appeared his first substantive work—a kind of "Natural History ethics" from an individualist point of view, to which he gave the name of *Social Statics*. He was already feeling his way, ambitiously enough, to the discovery of some synthesis or organon which should at the same time comprehend his theories and carry off the accumulation of thoughts which oppressed him.

The next ten years were highly formative ones, and it was during them that Spencer was forming the friendships and the conceptions which supplied the basis of his great system. Prominent among the friends acquired at this time were George Henry Lewes, the Brays of Coventry, T. H. Huxley, George Eliot, "the most admirable woman, mentally, I ever knew," and John Stuart Mill, who offered to guarantee the philosopher's publisher against pecuniary loss, a proposal, indeed, which Spencer would not entertain, though he was profoundly touched by the offer. Since the challenge thrown down by his first book, with its fundamental idea that every man is free to do whatsoever he wills, providing he does not infringe the equal freedom of any other man, his ideas were rapidly classifying and developing themselves, under the heads of sociology, biology, psychology, and ethics; and towards the end of this period Darwin's principle of variation (for which Spencer himself invented the descriptive title "the survival of the fittest") supplied him with a link of the utmost value to his general theory.

Like Bentham, of whose mind his own was in some respects a replica, Herbert Spencer at little over thirty was harnessed to his life-work, the man of one idea, a philosophical Vitruvius, and at seventy he was still hard at work upon it, systematising like Bentham or any dragon. Huxley epigrammatised the foible of his friend when he said that Spencer's idea of a tragedy was a deduction killed by a fact. The heroic quality of Spencer's achievement is brought into relief, not so much by the magnitude of the undertaking, as by the physical and financial difficulties which had to be overcome. After writing his *Principles of Psychology* in 1855 he was afflicted by a severe nervous breakdown, which lasted intermittently all the rest of his life, he had no independent means sufficient to ensure the publication of his books, and had in consequence to depend entirely upon the precarious goodwill of a small body of subscribers. In 1860, nevertheless, he issued the memorable prospectus of his philosophic system, and from that date until 1896 he worked steadily at the completion of one segment after another of his vast circle of theory, in addition to a large number of abstruse papers on controversial themes, and his three popular tractettes, *Education* (1861), *The Study of Sociology* (1873), and *The Man versus the State* (1884). In few philosophers have the functions

of thought been more specialised than they were in Spencer, and from few, if any, English lives has the philosophic type derived more honour than from his. He was a man of 5 feet 10 inches in height, with black hair, a broad but not very high forehead, with long passionless lips, suggesting a provoking obstinacy in argument, which he certainly did nothing to belie. His light blue eyes, it might be thought, bespoke a lack of emotional depth, and the tinge of colour on his cheek-bones attested an incorruptness of nature. In mind and habits he was certainly a nonconformist of the nonconformists, he not only refused a white tie, but went so far as to refuse an honorary degree; he prided himself rather than otherwise on being impervious to rote learning, he disliked reading of every kind, and only skimmed books dealing with subjects with which he was most nearly interested. Receptiveness was to his mind a cardinal fault of the age, which was badly deficient in critical and constructive imagination.

At a period when most human beings are occupied in testing their theories about nature and sensibility, Spencer was already obsessed by the rhythm preserved between homogeneity and heterogeneity, and the discovery of a formula for the laws of growth and dissolution. He was not, however, a prodigy like his friend Mill or his prototype Bentham, but the man, accomplished in many directions as an inventor, draughtsman, modeller, musician, writer, and engineer, who would have probably excelled in many departments of life. Like so many thinkers, however, including Carlyle, Comte, Mill, and Darwin, among his contemporaries, Spencer was the life-long valetudinarian, his nervous invalidism was the immediate cause of his irritability, and so, in all probability, of the hypercritical and antagonist point of view which he was prepared to assume upon the slightest provocation.

What portion of Spencer's system will be salvaged by a future age it is impossible to surmise. The simple sum of his own creed can be uttered only reservedly as a statement of three probabilities: that consciousness represents a specialised and individualised form of the infinite energy; that it is dissolved by death; and that its elements then return to the source of all being. As for our mental attitude towards the Infinite Mystery, his advice is plain. We must resign ourselves to the eternal laws, and endeavour to vanquish our ancient inheritance of superstitious terrors, remembering that "merciless as the cosmic process worked out by an Unknown Power may be, yet vengeance is nowhere to be found in it."

As remarkable for intensive as was Spencer for comprehensive genius in scientific research was the great biologist of the Victorian era. Since the days of that great intuitive genius and pioneer of classification, John Ray, yeoman service had been done in zoology by a notable quartet of foreign savants—Linnaeus, Buffon, Cuvier, and Lamarck. Much, too, had been contributed by the speculations of Erasmus Darwin, the great geologist Lyell, the astronomer Herschel, the traveller Humboldt, the botanist Sir W. Hooker, and the popularising author of *The Vestiges of Creation* (Robert Chambers), a book which caused an immense stir upon its first appearance to qualify the crudity of an idea widely held by the pre-Darwinian ecclesiastic to the effect that Man was created on Friday, October 23rd, 4004 B.C., at 9 a.m. precisely. *The Vestiges of Creation* served to break the subsequent shock, but it was widely regarded as a dangerous book, and the theory of creation suggested in Genesis was believed on all hands to be substantially the true one. The anarchy who was to shatter what the Higher Criticism and the Higher Evolution in conjunction were unable to shake was one of the most patient, unassuming, and methodical of savants. The son of a doctor and grandson both of Erasmus Darwin, the great speculative naturalist of Lichfield, and of Josiah Wedgwood, the famous potter, Charles Darwin was born at Shrewsbury on February 12th, 1809. He was educated at the Shrewsbury Grammar School, in front of which, to the scandal of the local orthodox, his statue was erected a few years after his death, but his development was slow and irregular, and he was pronounced a disgrace to his school and to his family. A medical career was deemed beyond his powers, and a passion for beetles was accepted as pointing to a career of contented usefulness as a country clergyman. Like Huxley, he was in reality being efficiently self-taught, and the underlying soundness of his education was discerned at Cambridge by Sedgwick and Henslow. These good judges of innate talent recommended him in 1831 as naturalist in H.M.S. *Beagle* during a surveying voyage round the world, and in spite of the phrenological scruples of the captain, who had doubts about the firmness indicated by his nose, he obtained the appointment. The five years' voyage that ensued determined his whole career. Three years after his return he published his deeply interesting *Journal of Researches* (1839), which supplied the scientific world at large with materials for ample thought, and gained him a foremost position at a bound. Before this publication he had propounded to himself the great problem of his life, and as early as October, 1838, there occurred to him, consequent upon reading Malthus *On Population*, and brooding upon the far-reaching struggle for existence which his investigation revealed, a leading clue to the centre of the labyrinth: the idea, namely, that under the circumstances indicated by Malthus favourable variations would tend to be preserved and unfavourable to be destroyed throughout the whole of the animal kingdom. The result would be the formation of new species. In 1842 he withdrew from London to the retirement of Down in Kent, a life-long invalid to the full as much as Spencer, but wholly devoted to and sustained by this fruitful line of research, piling up evidence for the evolution and against the immutability of species which matured after twenty years of steady work into the complete exposition of Natural Selection in the famous *Origin of Species*.

Thomas Henry Huxley, born on May 4th, 1825 (and by a stroke of luck named after that particular apostle for whom he always had most sympathy), was the son of George Huxley, a master of Dr. Nicholas's school at Ealing, the school from which Newman had proceeded to the conquest of Oxford in 1816. His father was a man of extremely tenacious will, his mother even more remarkable for her bright eye and rapid

mental processes. He inherited to the full the pugnacity of the one and the mother-wit of the other. A pretty boy who preached to the maids in the kitchen, he was in a sense a born pulpiteer, and was often quizzed by Herbert Spencer in later life for his "clerical affinities." He was destined to be self-educated, for in 1833 the Ealing school decayed. He was instructed in medicine under a brother-in-law, and in 1842 entered Charing Cross Hospital, where he ran a distinguished course. He qualified as a naval surgeon at Haslar, and was from 1846 to 1850 naturalist to the *Rattlesnake* on its tour, his papers home securing him his election as F.R.S. at the early age of twenty-six. After three years' unsettlement, battles with the Treasury, and unsuccessful candidatures, he was in 1854 appointed lecturer at the School of Mines and naturalist to the Geological Survey. He was soon a popular lecturer at the Royal Institution, he served on numerous Royal Commissions, and in course of time accumulated all the honours which British science is able to bestow upon its most distinguished votaries. From 1859 Huxley became an ardent apostle of Darwinism, and in particular of the light thrown by Evolution upon Man and his history, to elucidate which he published several discourses in what proved an epoch-making book, *Man's Place in Nature* (1863). Among his other books, apart from technical treatises on Physiology and Morphology, the most noted were *Lay Sermons* (1876), *Physiography*, his profoundly excogitated study of *Hume* (1879), and various *Lectures and Essays*, many of them upon controverted questions.

Veracity of thought and action was his ideal, truthfulness the cardinal virtue about which no compromise was possible. Interpreted sometimes aggressively, this involved the subordination of distinction in research to the popularisation of science, to the development of scientific education, to endless skirmishes over evolution, and to "untiring opposition to that ecclesiastical spirit, that clericalism which in England, as everywhere else, and to whatever denomination it may belong, is the deadly enemy of science." For all these purposes Huxley was equipped as no other man of his generation. In an age of great scientific expositors his pen was the keenest and most trenchant. Readiness of wit and an almost unrivalled turn for caustic phrase contributed to a very powerful controversial manner. Popular opinion was bitten again and again by the keen edge of his wit. He was the father of modern laboratory instruction—manner and matter alike admirable—and, as a popular lecturer, he was only surpassed by Tyndall. He was the eponymous hero of the numerous tribe of agnostics, and waged many bitter campaigns against orthodox beliefs—in particular against the miracles of the New Testament, the Hellenised Judaism of the medium through which we see Christ, and the ordinary moral conception of the cosmic order. Moral sense, according to him, was intuitional in origin, but thoroughly utilitarian in development. The reaction of his sanguine temperament alone protected him from sheer pessimism. But in actual life he was an eager liver, burning up his waste products with an indefatigable zeal, a most stimulating preacher, and in all his private and public relations one of the most lovable, impetuous, and disinterested of men. He died at Eastbourne on June 29th, 1895.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER—XII

YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY IN PROSE AND VERSE

R. L. Stevenson—Meredith—Hardy—Swinburne.

THE literary pilots of the last generation have excelled almost impartially in prose and verse. Like Scott and Thackeray, while paying their first devoirs to prose romance, Stevenson, Meredith, and Hardy alike have written lasting and memorable verse. Swinburne, again, has enriched English prose with some of the most inspiring and incisive, if not the most judicial, criticism in the language. Three of these writers at least have shown themselves clever draughtsmen. Their literary output is all well above the elevated plateau created by the intellectual *massif* of an era of enormous contending energies, and from which a drop seems unmistakably to coincide with the concluding years of the nineteenth century.

I

ROBERT LOUIS BALFOUR STEVENSON, son of Thomas Stevenson, a distinguished lighthouse engineer, and Margaret Balfour, was born at Edinburgh on November 13th, 1850. He was a delicate child, but observant, precocious in talking and writing, and ambitious of fame in the family groove as lighthouse builder. In 1866 and 1868 he had already essayed two trifling but not uncharacteristic papers called *The Pentland Rising* and *The Charity Bazaar*. In 1871 he exchanged engineering for the Scottish Bar, began his career as a talker, and became known to literary friends as "Louis," known also for his persistent attempts to acquire a great style, and become a limner of phrases, an artist in words. In his own phrase, he played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, Lamb, Browne, Defoe, Montaigne, and from them learned enough, at any rate, to teach his generation valuable lessons in the plastic qualities of prose diction. In 1875 he began writing essays for Sir Leslie Stephen, then editing *The Cornhill*, and in the same year his cousin, R. A. M. Stevenson, introduced him into the cosmopolitan artist colony at Barbizon; the society proved most congenial to such a born Bohemian as "R. L. S." Some of his best work was done under this stimulus. For a short time subsequently he continued to walk Parliament House and to astonish Edinburgh society at evening parties in pepper-and-salt trousers, but he was already preparing for press *The Inland Voyage*, the record of a canoe journey from Antwerp to Pontoise, and his first published book (1878). Meanwhile, however, three books were in the making—*Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), a volume of the most sprightly and fascinating among modern essays, dedicated to his great friend W. E. Henley; *New Arabian Nights*, a set of fantastic modern tales; and the sub-Borrovia *Travels with a Donkey in the Cevennes*, rich in some incommunicable charm of cheery egoism of which Stevenson almost alone since Charles Lamb had won the secret. In August, 1879, he started off alone for California, collecting new materials and making notes even during the steerage passage, which he booked to save unnecessary expense. Having spent nearly a year in the Far West, he returned with his wife to Edinburgh. At Braemar during the following summer, a period of great literary activity ensued, and most of *The Merry Men*, *The Child's Garden of Verse*, and *Treasure Island* were written. But the author was becoming a confirmed sufferer from tubercular trouble, and the quest of health during winters in the Engadine and on the Riviera was followed in September, 1884, by a settlement of three years at Bournemouth. Here he either wrote or planned all the surplus of his best work, the romantic comedy, *Prince Otto*, the Jacobite boys' story of *Kidnapped*, and the weirdest and most popular of all his short stories, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. By this time, too, most of those riper essays of finest fruitage were written which subsequently found a place in *Familiar Studies* and *Across the Plains*.

Stevenson was indignant with those critics who were unable to recognise the progressive development of his art; but the fact is that he was already a finished artist at twenty-five (when he contributed *Victor Hugo's Romances* to *The Cornhill*, and was "received into the best society"), and that little remained except for him to become more than finished, to become, in short, that dread thing, *finikin* (a tendency by no means wholly absent from some of his later writings). From boyish days he had served a stern apprenticeship to the old masters. Like a young Reynolds or Landseer with his sketch-book, the young Stevenson had always his note-book with him and never let a day pass without setting his palette and experimenting with his colours. He set himself well-defined exercises, and marked his own blunders with the help of the crib—now Lamb or Hazlitt, now Macaulay or Meredith. Flaubert could hardly have schooled Maupassant more severely than this youth, but recently emancipated from the Edinburgh Academy, schooled himself. What was started as a hobby

soon became an absorbing passion, until at twenty-five he found himself a young "master of wordmanship" (to borrow his phrase for Hugo), a stripling adept in the use of a weapon which so many literary giants have failed to master. We think of Hazlitt, that unrivalled hero of fluent writing, as he was to become, "vainly trying year after year to write a single essay, nay a single page," and we marvel at the expedition of this wonderful youth. The first purpose to which he bent his new weapons was the conversion of happy thoughts on life, and the happy ideas of a vagrant of letters—not into journalese, not into laboured jocosities, but into a vesture of English prose so felicitously embroidered that artists such as Newman or Arnold might have set their names to it with impunity.

The same gifts—the same keen eye for effect, the same artistic cleverness of perfection and invention, the same flashes of insight into obscure doublings of the mind—served him in his short stories, grim and diabolic, such as *The Suicide Club* and *Jekyll and Hyde* (of the species which he himself defined as "crawlers"), blithely humorous and fantastic as *Providence and the Guitar*, pictorial as the *Sire de Malédroit's Door*, or psychological as *Markheim*. Stevenson's extraordinary technical skill naturally begot versatility, temptation to display which was to prove his particular failing. At Braemar at the commencement of his chronic invalidism in 1881 he turned from his appointed work as essayist and short-story writer to write clever verse, and to follow in the wake of Kingston, Ballantyne the Brave, and Fenimore Cooper as a writer of books for boys. He had all the "boymanship" of Kingsley, and he turned straight from *At Last* and Johnson's *History of the Pirates* to write the first twenty chapters of *Treasure Island*. Artificial books perhaps—both this and *Kidnapped*—but live books, volatile books, dangerous books to leave about—so inviting are they to "take up," so impossible to "lay down."

The later years of the novelist were spent in the Pacific, where he seemed for a time to be regaining the health which the cruel winds of Edinburgh had undermined: eventually at Vailima in the island of Samoa, where he exercised some of the functions of a little principate, and where he died suddenly on December 3rd, 1894. There was something rather Byronic about the gyrations of his last years, and the almost roguish egotism with which he obtruded himself into the politics of his new hemisphere. Nauseating doses of Stevensoniana, dealing mainly with this period of his career—legends, anecdotes, twaddling details and extravagant eulogies—have done something to endanger his reputation and veil the strenuous artist, whose letters are chips from the workshop of one of the finest literary artificers England has known, from the cordial gaze of old admirers. But the true corrective is Stevenson himself, not the versatile poseur of literary gossip and uncritical adulation, but the single-minded artist who gave to the world of his very best in half a dozen volumes such as *Virginibus*, *Modestine*, *The Merry Men*, *New Arabian Nights*, *Across the Plains*.

Stevenson's legacy has not been a very prosperous one for the English novel. There are two kinds of romance—the romance of incongruity and strangeness, which makes now an obscure appeal to the historical emotions of an ancient race, now a crude appeal to their sense of pity, wonder or repulsion. Psychologically it is commonly defective, lending a *panache* to acts of heroism which are usually performed in an unconscious and totally undramatic fashion, and attaching a sense of enjoyment to the performance of hazardous exploits which is very rarely experienced by the actual performers. The second kind of romance is the truer and profounder, dealing with the universal transfiguration of the ordinary non-heroic individual mind, however unromantic in the conventional sense may be its habitual environment, under the spring-born influences of youth and first love. The universal, not the accidental, kind of romance is the theme of the greatest masters. Stevenson helped to re-create a strong factitious taste for the romance of heaped-up and multiplied incident, the persistence of which has called into existence a vast host of "utility" romanticists, escrimeurs, costumiers, ferociously whiskered and long-spurred caballeros of the circus.

II

The greatest exponent of the post-Dickensian novel—the novel which was entering upon a critical stage, somewhat similar to that of the English drama onwards from 1616—is George Meredith, whose earliest essays in verse bear a date anterior to that of *Adam Bede*. Sprung from the same class as his compeers, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, like Hardy, is a native of South Wessex, having been born near Petersfield on February 12th, 1828. In other respects the Cymric and Hibernian blood that flowed freely in his veins separates him widely from the great race of Victorian novelists, if we except the Brontës; another distinction is to be discerned in his education in Germany and his early, intuitive appreciation of the literary art of modern France. His adolescent wit made the idea of a vocation to any other profession than that of letters seem little short of an impertinence; he was soon diverted from the law and became known in the literary circles of Rossetti, Swinburne, Thackeray, the Stephens, and the circle of contributors to *Once a Week*, *The Cornhill*, and *The Pall Mall Gazette*. He made his bow with a poem on Chillianwallah, which contains one or two typical lines, in *Chambers's Journal* of July, 1849, in which year he married a daughter of the eccentric and brilliant dialogue-spinning novelist, Thomas Love Peacock, and settled at Weybridge, whence he dedicated his *Poems* to T. L. P. in 1851. His beginnings in literature were somewhat erratic, for after the *Poems* he veered to the vividly entertaining arabesque called *The Shaving of Shagpat* (December, 1855), and two years later published his cold but delicately frosted Teutonic fantasy of *Farina: A Legend of Cologne* (1857). Soon after this he entered upon the post of reader to a publishing firm, in which capacity he first detected the "promise"



Photo by Fred. Hollyer.

George Meredith

of two of the greatest masters of modern English fiction—Thomas Hardy and George Gissing. After Scott he is probably the most eminent man of letters who has ever served a big publisher in this somewhat thankless profession. At thirty-one he published his first novel proper, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (June, 1859), the transcendent merit of which was very soon recognised by the best critics of the day. There was about it an extraordinary mixture of lyrical fervour (amounting in one love scene to poetic ecstasy), of cynical audacity, of unconventional handling, and of what the French call *panache*. There was, however, a peculiarity about the author's style which rendered it almost as unfit a means of expression for universal popularity as the dot and dash system known as the Morse code. In 1860 the author commenced the publication of his second novel, *Evan Harrington*, in the pages of *Once a Week*. In fiction it is the *déuxième pas qui coûte*, and if ever a second novel from its very first chapter spelt unmistakable genius, it was this. The aphorisms and asperities which had tortured the surface of *Feverel* were kept under a stricter control, and the influence of Dickens and Thackeray is seen more clearly, while that of Disraeli and Peacock is hardly perceptible. The stage is crowded with comedy characters, such as confront us in *Vanity Fair* and *The Newcomes*. The intriguing countess, the secret of whose plebeian birth is the "Demogorgon" of the book, is worthy of Thackeray at his best. Her father, the unrivalled and marquis-like "Mel," is a tailor, unashamed alike of shears and shop, 193, Main Street, Lymport. This magnanimous "Snip" dies in the first paragraph and pervades the story to the last. Other writers have attempted to interest the reader in a character kept out of sight, but never with such success as Meredith in *Evan Harrington*. The whole of this wonderful book is full of an irony as hard to fathom as the hopes of youth. Its satire on snobbery far surpasses that of Thackeray in edge. It is admirably written, with lightning strokes of insight and episodes of a brilliant luminosity (the incident between Evan and the postilion, for example, the dinner-party again, or the cricket-match at Beckley), while the manœuvres of the countess indicate a surprising dexterity in the manipulation of detail. The public, with its usual perversity, failed to make any recognition of a truly chivalric effort to pleasure it, and cruelly has Meredith punished it for its dense stupidity. Just as Lamb said to himself, "Damn the Age! I will write for antiquity," so Meredith began to think, "Hang the public! I will write for Balliol and Trinity. I will keep my illumination for Benedick's college of wit-crackers' or the scholars' cloister." The result has been a gulf greater than constructive differences need have created between Meredith and a popular audience. The determination to which we have referred, whether conscious or unconscious, is seen in full force after *Rhoda Fleming*, his great novel of 1865, sandwiched between *Sandra Belloni* and *Vittoria*, two stories of the Italian revolution of 1848. *Rhoda Fleming* is a study of elemental passions and of tragic fate worthy in some respects of the Elizabethan drama, marred to some extent by unreality and incredible language, but still very great. To have such work condemned by *The Athenæum* (which had been so favourable to his first novel) for its factitious sprightliness and *ponderous gaiety* must have been a sore blow to the sensitive artist. The result is soon manifest. In *Harry Richmond* (1871), which in respect of its real hero, Richmond Roy (that sublime architect in Cloudland), is one of the master's most brilliant creations, he takes a last fantastic farewell of the outer and nether world of men and women. His *personæ* are all henceforth brilliant projections of George Meredith, and speak with the *ore rotundo* of their creator. The frost which seemed to have finally overtaken two books of such amazing originality and power as *Evan Harrington* and *Rhoda Fleming* drove his eccentricities inwards. As with Browning, he became unduly self-conscious, unduly contemptuous of popular appreciation. A spendthrift of intellect, he is apt to forget that an epigram is often like a proverb, only a half-way house to an idea. It must be said, however, that in addition to its epigrammatic wit his style has many other great notable qualities. Like a sword of Spain, it can in a moment bend like a bow and spring back again to the bright quivering, darting line that bears the insuperable point. These idiosyncrasies of his reach their climax in *Diana of the Crossways* (1885), a dangerous book to put into the hand of a neophyte, which has made many a would-be Meredithian throw up his hands in despair. But in the meantime he had produced one of his manliest and most complex novels, *Beauchamp's Career* (1876). He also produced that extraordinary piece of analysis in *The Egoist* (1879) which made an epoch in the fame of its author and converted the study of his novels into a species of scientific cult.

George Meredith attains to the highest intensity, and his idiosyncrasy as a writer is most felt, in such works as *Feverel*, *The Egoist*, and *Diana*; as master-builder of a modern novel, *totus teres atque rotundus*, he is in our opinion seen to best advantage in *Evan Harrington* and *Beauchamp's Career*, representing successively his early and late styles. His delineation of high-born ladies, the nineteenth-century successors of Olivia, Beatrice, Portia, and Desdemona, has often been celebrated. All his women are crucible-women—women by whom men and the world are tested. If men fail under the test, that which should be a lamp becomes a flaming furnace in the hand. "For women are not the end, but the means of life, and they punish us for perverting their uses; they punish society." But he is never a sentimental slave of woman. He can laugh at her too, and over her quixotries and serious-faced patents for "emancipating" the sex is as merry as Adrian Harley. For the female faddist he has as little mercy as Dickens in *Bleak House*. "Relapsed upon religion and little dogs," is his caustic summing-up of Mrs. Caroline Grandison, into whose garden of girls Sir Austin Feverel carried "the Cinderella slipper" on behalf of his model son, and into the secrets of whose forcing-house we are allowed a peep—the gymnasium fitted up with swing-poles and stride-poles and newly invented instruments for bringing out special virtues: an instrument for the lungs, an instrument for the liver, one for the arms and thighs, one for the wrists—the whole for the promotion of Christian accomplishments. "Woolly negroes blest her name, and whiskered John Thomases deplored

her weight." More concisely even than this "philanthropist" is the Baroness von Crepelot characterised and referred to her not unfamiliar species as "one of those persons who after a probationary term in the character of women have become men." Those two brilliant sayings, "Woman will probably be the last thing civilised by man," and "Man has rounded Seraglio Point, but has not yet doubled Cape Turk," are among his best remembered epigrams. Fine, however, as the women characters are amply conceded to be, his conception of a patriotic English gentleman, which may be traced through so many of his works, seems to us to be a still finer and more ennobling one.

III

THOMAS HARDY, the greatest exponent of the English novel of the generation succeeding that of George Meredith, was born at Upper Bockhampton, near Dorchester, on June 2nd, 1840, and he lives at Dorchester still. At sixteen he was articled to an ecclesiastical architect named Hicks in Dorchester, and afterwards worked under Blomfield in London, and at King's College. His first literary paper, *How I built myself a House*, a humorous sketch, appeared in *Chambers's Journal* in March, 1865. His first novel, the self-revealing but crudely constructed *Desperate Remedies*, was published, twenty-two years after *Richard Feverel*, in 1871, and was followed in 1872 by the delicious village idyll called *Under the Greenwood Tree*, describing how the tranter's son, Dick Dewy, won the belle of the parish from the rivalry of all the swains of Mellstock and Lewgate. It deserves its sub-title of "a rural painting of the Dutch school" of Teniers and Van Ostade. Next came a fully developed novel of whimsical courtship in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873). In his first and third novels, as in the subsequent *Laodicean*, Thomas Hardy freely utilises his experience of a profession represented hitherto in English fiction only by the repulsive figure of Mr. Pecksniff. In 1874 he married, and issued *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which sealed his final vocation to letters. The descriptions in this powerful story of natural phenomena, winter starlight, and a sinister tempest created a new era in the natural history of English fiction. His next essay, *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), is an anomalous study in light comedy and society satire, in which the influence of Thackeray and Meredith seems to have led the author astray from his native and thoroughly known Wessex. Next comes a masterpiece, *The Return of the Native* (1878), preluded by a piece of descriptive writing which brings the contours of the moorland region ("Egdon Heath") to the south and west of Wareham before us with an almost preternatural solemnity and power. Hardy's imagination creates a perspective for us which carries the mind's eye back with ease to the remotest and most primitive life upon the planet. His humour creates a group of grotesque and quaint country figures which symbolise a life that has changed but little in the course of centuries among the fields. He does for the peasants of South England exactly what Borrow does for the Romanies: he rescues them from the obliteration to which the rapid locomotion and rapid education of our day have so inevitably destined our fine old rural stock. His books, moreover, seem to draw upon a reservoir of English peasant folk—the sly, unchanging, good-humoured and well-featured descendants of Gurth the Saxon, with whom our town populations have from day to day so increasingly little in common.

But Hardy's England, though to most of us elusive, is an essentially real one. The mead-drinking rustic folk of Wessex were in existence just as he depicts them thirty—nay, even twenty—years ago. Now "what with the parsons and clerks and school people and serious tea parties, the merry old ways of good life have gone to the dogs—upon my carcass they have." Three great novels of tragic character and import followed in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). The general effect of all is sombre, for that passion of love without which, in Hardy's philosophy, life is so utterly savourless is converted in all of them to a source of torment hardly less than it is represented in *Wuthering Heights*. The clear-eyed realism, moreover, with which he controls his incidents and abjures those happy endings so dear to the English novel-reader imparts a plaintive note, a melancholy tinge, to nearly all his best work. The general effect can be described in the words of George Meredith (speaking of the eyes of his French heroine)—a peep through dewy woodland on to dark water.

Hardy has gained something, it may be, from George Sand and the Brontës, and from those pioneers of psychology in fiction, Hawthorne and George Eliot; but he is perhaps one of the most original, as he is also one of the most perfect and artistic, writers of English. The distinction which Loti has gained in France as a master of impressionistic French, Hardy had previously gained in England as a master of impressionistic English. His sensitiveness to aerial and atmospheric effects, to the moods and changes of day and night, to the voices of heath bells, the rustling of trees, the moaning of the wind, to the most delicate harmonies of colour and sound and form, enables him to bring his admirers into the inmost heart and shrine of the sombre and sphinx-like but exquisite Nature that he worships.

IV

"Par le génie du rythme et la puissance d'expression, par le merveilleux secret de donner, instantanément, à toute sensation son exposant sonore avec sa pulsation de vie, Swinburne est un des prodiges de l'histoire littéraire."—P. DE REUL.

BORN in the year of Queen Victoria's accession (on April 5th, 1837), Algernon Charles Swinburne is beyond all comparison the greatest poet now living. He comes of an old Northumbrian family. His



From the Painting by G. F. Watts, R.A. Photo, Fred. Hollyer.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

father was Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, younger son of Sir John Edward Swinburne, his mother Lady Jane Henrietta, daughter of George, third Earl of Ashburnham. It is erroneous to say that he was educated in France, his sojourns in that country having been of the briefest description, but he was from early days an ardent French scholar. Like Shelley, he was educated at Eton. He matriculated from Balliol in 1856. While at the University he contributed four times—three articles and a poem—to *Undergraduate Papers*, a periodical edited by John Nichol. He left Oxford in 1860, without having taken a degree. As Jowett remarked in a letter to Stubbs (to whom the young Swinburne was sent for private coaching), he was the most extraordinary young man he had ever come across, devoting the whole of his time and thought to French and English literature, often of the most out-of-the-way kind, and to poetry. "It was all language with him: I could never find that he was following any line of thought." In the following year he went to Italy—always a considerable event in an artist's life. But to this visit an additional interest attaches. At Fiesole was living Walter Savage Landor, to whom the young poet had a letter of introduction. His admiration for the author of *Imaginary Conversations* has been expressed in *In Memory of Walter Savage Landor (Poems and Ballads)*, in the *Song for the Centenary of Walter Savage Landor (Studies in Song)*, and in the Greek dedicatory verses of *Atalanta in Calydon*. Landor lived to accept this dedication, but died before the play was published. On his return to England the young poet lived for about a year in Cheyne Walk with Rossetti, whom he had met at Oxford engaged upon the Union frescoes. He also became intimate with Burne-Jones and William Morris. Though in some respects owing a good deal to the stylistic influence of the pre-Raphaelite school, his poetry owes little to the author of *The House of Life*. Indeed, from the first his hand was stronger and surer than Rossetti's ever was.

His first book (*The Queen Mother and Rosamond*) appeared in 1860. In 1865 *Atalanta in Calydon* made him famous, and in the following year *Poems and Ballads* made him notorious. *Atalanta* is often called Swinburne's greatest work. Less Greek in spirit and form than the later *Erechtheus*, its more sumptuous colouring has always made it more popular. Some of the speeches, notably the opening "Maiden and mistress of the months and stars," and the Herald's "Some furlongs northward where the brakes begin," are as fine as anything in English dramatic verse, while the choruses, of which the greatest perhaps are "When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces," and "We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair," prelude the unimagined wealth of metrical invention to be displayed next year in *Poems and Ballads*. Before this volume, in the same year as *Atalanta*, appeared *Chastelard*, the first part of the Mary Stuart trilogy, a foretaste of the fiery luxuriance which marked Swinburne's first lyric volume. *Poems and Ballads* (1866) was greeted with howls and hisses from the critics. Scandalous verses there were, no doubt, rioting on the crests of some of these billows of song—the enemies of poesy took a special delight in exposing them to the general view. What they failed to perceive was the relative harmlessness of all this outburst about the roses and lilies of vice and white death; or, again, that the poems were the outpourings of a young singer up to the chin in the Parian flood, and possessed by a poetic energy so urgent that it could not wait to apply the touchstone of reality or the chastening planes of experience. Faustine and Dolores are scarcely human women. Their attributes are borrowed from the conceptions of the poets, especially those of the Baudelaire school that Swinburne chiefly admired. In a book where so much is great, it is temerarious to mention any particular poems. Perhaps the finest are *The Triumph of Time*, the two Proserpine poems, *Anactoria*, *Dolores*, *Faustine*, *Itylus*, and *Félice*. Such poems as these, *Hesperia*, *Aholibah*, *A Match*, came as a revelation to students of English verse. The mastery of rhythm seemed to sum up and to surpass the previous experiments of our tone poets. In *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) are the earliest of the poems which celebrate the Italian struggle for liberty. After *Poems and Ballads* this is Swinburne's most uniformly great volume of lyrics. Some of the poems are concerned with definite events (*The Halt before Rome*, *Quia Multum Amavit*, etc.), while others are more abstract songs of liberty (*The Pilgrims*, *Mater Dolorosa*, *Mater Triumphalis*). *Hertha* and *The Hymn of Man* set forth a subtle and complete "Pananthropism," which takes the place of the paganism of a few years before. *Before a Crucifix* is a terrible indictment, not of Christ, but of modern Christianity. *Bothwell*, the second play of the Scotch trilogy, appeared in 1874. Although Thomas Hardy has upset Mr. Symonds's "reasonable hope that *Bothwell* is the longest play in existence," the fact remains that five hundred large pages are far too many for a dramatic work. But its historical accuracy and the sustained excellence of the verse alike make it a notable achievement. *Songs of Two Nations*, in the following year, is a pendant to *Songs before Sunrise*. It consists of a splendid *Song of Italy*, written in 1867 in praise of Mazzini, an *Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic* (1870), and a series of seventeen sonnets entitled *Diræ*, which must be among the fiercest and most bitter things ever written—even upon Napoleon III. *Erechtheus* (1876) is the second tragedy in imitation of the Greek. It reproduces the feeling of the tragedians (*Æschylus* more especially) much more closely than does *Atalanta*.

A second series of *Poems and Ballads* appeared two years later. Only one piece recalls the erotic luxuriance of the earlier volume—*At a Month's End*. The wonderful *Ave atque Vale*, written in memory of Charles Baudelaire, stands out as the greatest poem in the book. As an elegy it is almost comparable with *Adonais* and *Lycidas*. *A Forsaken Garden* is one of the first and one of the finest of those poems in which Swinburne has sung the sea in all its moods, as no other has ever sung it. There are also some successful translations of Villon, but the *Ballade of Françoise Villon*, written in one of the French poet's own favourite metres, is far finer than any of these. These almost miraculous experiments in rondeaux and ballades, so completely surpassing the

originals in flexibility, betray the strong influence of Banville and the French *Parnasse*. The chief interest of *Songs of the Springtides* (1880) centres in *Thalassius*, which may be regarded as autopsychological. In *Studies in Song*, the poet's marvellous sympathy with the sea is at its height (*Off Shore, By the North Sea*). In 1881 *Mary Stuart* completed the cycle of the Queen of Scots, which had occupied the poet intermittently for sixteen years. Though its interest is perhaps more historic than poetic, towards the close it rises to a very high dramatic pitch. *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882) is the greatest achievement of Swinburne's later years. Owing to the complexity of its psychology it has not the mediæval atmosphere of Morris's *Defence of Guinevere*, but as poetry pure and simple it takes far higher rank. *Iseult at Tintagel* is one of the most powerful monodies ever written. *A Midsummer Holiday* (1884), *Poems and Ballads*, third series (1889), *Astrophel* (1894), and *A Channel Passage* (1904), are volumes of miscellaneous poems, and include all Swinburne's most characteristic themes. *Astrophel* contains a splendid tribute to Sir Philip Sidney, and *Poems and Ballads* and *A Channel Passage* are rich in memorial verses to the poet's friends and compeers. In these later books the poet's powers seem to be waning a little. He has still the same wonderful fertility in metres, but the sureness of hand, the inevitability of phrase are lacking. Nevertheless, *A Nympholept*, and *The Ballad of Dead Men's Bay* (*Astrophel*), *Les Casquettes* (*A Midsummer Holiday*), *The Armada*, and the Jacobite poems in the third *Poems and Ballads*, and the dedication of *The Channel Passage* to the memory of William Morris and Burne-Jones, are among his most perfect work. This last, written in the *Dolores* metre (in which Mr. Swinburne never fails), forms a sort of antiphon to the dedication of *Poems and Ballads* (1866).

To go back a little, *Marino Faliero* (1885) is a drama founded on the story of the famous Doge. *Lochrine* (1887) is extraordinary in that its ten scenes are all written in differently arranged rhymed decasyllabic lines. It is necessarily rather in the nature of a *tour de force*, but has considerable dramatic and very great poetic value. In parts it reminds one faintly (rather on the surface than in fibre) of Maeterlinck. In 1892 Swinburne made an unexpected and not very happy experiment. *The Sisters* is a modern society love-tragedy, and might almost be a burlesque of Tennyson in his more bourgeois moments. *The Tale of Balen* (1896) is far more simple, and therefore in a certain sense more successful than *Tristram*, but it cannot be compared with the earlier work for poetic power. *Rosamond, Queen of the Lombards* (1899), a dramatic poem that has its source in a story in Gibbon, closes the list of Swinburne's poetry, with the exception of the *Heptalogia*, first published anonymously in 1880. This consists of seven parodies of poets then living: Tennyson, Browning, Mrs. Browning, Coventry Patmore, Lytton, Rossetti, and Swinburne himself. They are rather in the nature of criticisms, and at times (especially in the Lytton) inclined to be savage.

Mr. Swinburne's prose has many of the characteristics of his verse. It combines the same command of words with the same perfect rhythm and unrivalled mastery of alliteration. A study of William Blake (1868) was the first prose volume of any size that the poet produced. This was followed in 1875 by a book of miscellaneous literary papers entitled *Essays and Studies*. Its perfervid and torrential style makes rather breathless reading, and is apt to obscure the really acute criticisms which it decorates. But it never descends to mere wordiness, and frequently rises to the heights of lyric prose, as in the superb passage on Rossetti's *House of Life*, and the marvellous word-picture of a storm at sea which opens the essay on Hugo's *L'Homme qui Rit*, and is finer than the verse description of the same storm which the poet has lately given us in *The Channel Passage*. Two later volumes of critical essays—*Miscellanies* (1886) and *Studies in Prose and Poetry* (1894) are quieter in style, but gain thereby a dignity and strength which fully make up for the picturesqueness of the *Essays and Studies*. These essays, for the most part very brief, are principally, though not exclusively, concerned with poets. In *Miscellanies* the most notable papers are those headed *Wordsworth and Byron*, and *Tennyson and Musset*: the first an extraordinarily violent and very nearly ridiculous attack on Byron as a man and a poet; the second, a rather unnecessary defence of the great English poet against the small French one. The *Short Notes on English Poets* are the best things in the volume and display Mr. Swinburne's finest critical abilities. The latter half of *Studies in Prose and Verse* is taken up with eight articles on Hugo's posthumous works. The great Frenchman's relation to Mr. Swinburne is rather in the nature of that which Charles I.'s head bore to Mr. Dick.

Besides these three collections and the *William Blake* mentioned before, Mr. Swinburne's prose works comprise *George Chapman* (1875), *A Study of Shakespeare* (1880), and *A Study of Ben Jonson* (1889), which show an exhaustive knowledge of and perfect sympathy with the Elizabethans. *A Note on Charlotte Brontë* appeared in 1877, and *A Study of Victor Hugo* in 1887. Most of the poet's early pamphlets, as well as *Dead Love*, a little romance published the year before *Atalanta*, have long been out of print. The most notable of these are *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (1866), a fierce reply to his own critics, and *Under the Microscope* (1872), an equally virile denunciation of Rossetti's, more especially of Robert Buchanan, author of the famous *Fleshly School of Modern Poetry*. Not the least of Mr. Swinburne's achievements is the Dedicatory Epistle to the collected edition of his poems, which gives an interesting insight into the poet's own attitude towards his work. Many of his predilections (such as the preference of *Eretheus* to *Atalanta*) are not those of most of his readers. But he has himself talked of "the flagrant falsity and the impudent absurdity of the favourite opinion that a great man is probably not the best judge—if, indeed, he be not naturally the worst judge—as to the respective worth of his several great works." For the last twenty years or so Mr. Swinburne has resided with Mr. Watts-Dunton at The Pines, Putney. His life has illustrated for a much longer period an almost unprecedented and rare subjection and devotion to literary and artistic influences and emotions. As long ago as 1885 Guy de Maupassant described him as the most extravagantly artistic temperament of our time.

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